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THE BEQUEST OF

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MEROTH,

OR

"THE SACRIFICE TO THE NILE."

A Tragedy.

BY

ROBERT WILLIAM HUME.

"And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments."

EXODUS, Chapters vii. & viii.

"Dicitur Ægyptios cecidisse juvantibus arva
Imbribus, atque annos sicca fuisse novem.
Cum Thrasius Busiris adit, monstratque piari
Hospitis effuso, sanguine posse Jovem."

OVID.

"It is the relic of a hideous custom, which still prevails in Assam, and was formerly practised in Egypt, of flinging a youth and maiden, richly dressed, annually into their sacred river."

BISHOP HEBER'S *Journal*.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY R. W. HUME, 4, UNION-TERRACE, NOTTING-HILL;

AND

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INTRODUCTION.

THE history of Egypt is an enigma, the solution of which has defied the labours of the historian, the deductions of the philosopher, and the researches of the antiquary. In the few records we have of the earlier stages of this once mighty nation, truth and fiction, the real and the fabulous, are so intermingled, that the "reflected light" of history serves not to develope, but only to gild, the prominent objects in the waste, to awaken and not satisfy our curiosity.

This remarkable people have, by their superhuman efforts, proved the truth of those witnesses who formerly testified to their ancient superiority. Their knowledge enabled them to contend with the prophet of Israel, who was versed in all their lore, and they only submitted when they recognized in the act of creation "the finger of God." The existing evidences of their ingenuity have baffled the skill and defied the competition of all subsequent ages. Measuring their power by the magnificent remains yet left of their labors, it would be difficult to limit, or even to conceive, the extent of their resources or the elevation of their genius.

The mind of the beholder is agitated with a variety of conflicting emotions whilst contemplating the hallowed ground which this venerable race once occupied. Joy and sorrow, hope and despair, pride and humiliation, attend her examination of the shining foot-prints of arts which have now departed, and sciences which are now unknown. If the majestic ruins which are strewn around her path awake a feeling allied to joy, it is with sorrow she beholds in such crumbling and mutilated wrecks the sole-surviving and transitory testimonials of temples which were once "wonders of the world." If gazing with delight on those triumphant trophies of the genius of man,—the star-pointed obelisks,—she feels elevated by hope: alas! how quickly is it succeeded by the depression of despair, as she vainly sighs for a solution of the inscriptions by which they are adorned. If, glowing with raptures indescribable, she contemplates, entranced, those noble specimens of victorious art,—the time-defying pyramids,—whose massive walls have repelled the ravages of desolation, the whirlwinds of war, the rust of decay, and on whose cloud-scattering peaks the storms of forty centuries have battered in vain; even on this summit of her pride, this pinnacle of her glory, she is compelled to bewail the loss of that empire, religion, and race, which has been swept from around their sites, whose records are useless, and whose language is forgotten.

It is in this whirlwind of the passions, this tempest of the soul, that the inspired poet can best display the power of his genius, and dispersing (like his fabulous deity, the Sun) the clouds of obscurity and doubt, expose that beautiful scenery to our view which has so long been hidden by the mists of time and the gloom of barbarism. Here it is, where the beams of a lively fancy would fill with their radiance those interstices which the light of history cannot supply, enabling us again to discover those heroes of their day,—those demigods of succeeding generations,—which still flit around the scenes of their triumphs, looming, like gigantic spectres, through the gaps of the ruins by which they are surrounded. Piercing the darkness which pervades the sites of their achievements, the rays of a glowing imagination would reanimate the laurels now idly fluttering in the blast of desolation, and again, as victors, exhibit to the world the shades of a Menes, a Pharaoh, and a Sesostris.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MEROTH, Type of perverted knowledge,
ARBACES, Friend of Meroth,
IRAD, opposed to Meroth,
} Chief Priests and Magi.

CALMAR, Pupil and Son of Meroth.
EUCLID, the Mathematician, an old Egyptian Noble.
TIGRANES and another, Sacrificers to the Temple.
ZADOK, an insane ruined Merchant, Brother to Meroth.

MENES,
PTOLYCUS,
PSOPHIS,
} Egyptian voluptuaries.

ALCIBIADES, Captain of the Fleet,
SOCRATES, Type of wisdom,
CRITO, an Officer,
} Grecians.

An Officer of Meroth's Guard.
A Deputation of starving Citizens.
Magi, Greek Sailors, Choristers, and Attendants.

WOMEN.

EUDORA, Daughter of Euclid.
LEIRA, her Friend.
A band of Maidens.

ASHTAROTH, Meroth's Familiar.
MOLOCH, the Demon.
Glory, a Female Emblem of.

Scene, MEMPHIS; *Time*, Eight Days.

Era, 404 B.C.

MEROTH,

OR

THE SACRIFICE TO THE NILE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Inn at MEMPHIS. *The Nile seen through the Casement.*

MENES, PSOPHIS, *and* PTOLYCUS.

Voice without. Your dead! bring out your dead!

Ptol. What, another load? The pestilence must be sore in this quarter. Here, Psophis, here's a whet for your appetite; behold!

Psop. The wretches ought to be punished for carting the bodies by the inn. Pah! I smell the stench here.

Ptol. Better die now, Psophis, whilst the examiners are busy: your character will never pass muster unless you bribe the judges—or rather your friends, for should one witness be examined, you cannot fail being denied the rites of burial.

Psop. Cease your prate. What ships are those in the river, Menes?

Men. They are Grecian war galleys.

Psop. Who's their captain, have you heard?

Men. I have both heard and seen him—his name is Alcibiades.

Ptol. Ah! some black-looking cut-throat.

Men. You're wrong. He looks more like a Persian slave than a captain; but you can judge for yourself: here he comes, with old Euclid and another of the foreigners.

Psop. What a strange old man!

Ptol. They have a vanguard also—the madman Zadok—you forgot him in your list of wonders.

Psop. We'll have some sport with him. Here he comes, grumbling as usual.

(Enter ZADOK, *muttering to himself.)*

Zad. Two vessels lost, laden with Tyrian cloth
Of dye unparalleled. What saith th' invoice?
Spices of Ind, and jewels rich and rare,
All swallowed up by the voracious sea.
Oh! misery! I cannot face them: no!

Psop. How now, Zadok, dreaming again? Here, wake up: look at my hand.

Ptol. He ought to spell your fortune well, for his has gone the route yours appears to be going.

Psop. I spoke to a fool, Ptolycus, but I did not expect an answer from you.

Zad. My wife, too, dying! Oh, I shall go mad.

Psop. Nay, that's no journey for you, Zadok, you are so; but come, *(striking* ZADOK,) tell my luck.

Zad. Why plague ye me? More pestilence! Ye Gods,
Egypt has fools to feed it.

Ptol. Now that's what I call a personal insult. Here, I'll ask his advice for you, Psophis. Our friend has lost his appetite: he expressed but now a wish for your advice, most learned doctor Zadok, to learn what diet, whet, or provocative might suffice to allay or remove his unfortunate malady.

Zad. He better knows than I. He's spending now,
In searching for the same, his heritage.
'Tis poverty he seeks; no spiced rich meats,
Dainty confections, heat-inspiring wines
Or distillations equal hunger's sauce.
And poverty and hunger are as twins,
Inseparable. Why, they make men *wolves!*

Nay, worse—wolves herd; but hunger breaks all bonds,
And sates his cravings with a brother's flesh.
'Tis priceless, too; like sleep, it often spurns
Th' ambitious ruler or the purse-proud fool,
And finds sweet refuge with his meanest slave.
When poverty compels you to the dish—
The *beggar's dish*—of locusts, then you'll feast;
And sleep, which now you bribe on beds of down,
Shall seel your eyes then on the temple's steps.

Ptol. He's awake now. Hark! how he snarls! Where have you been, Zadok?

Zad. To see my gallant fleet arrive in port,
Gay streamers flaunting from their taper masts.
A noble fleet, laden with cutlery,
Choice cutlery; but it will take a mine!
'Twill ruin me to satisfy the hands.

Ptol. They're not your ships, they're war-galleys, fool. Know you not a war-galley from a merchantman?

Zad. Have I not lost three ships, three noble ships,
Beautiful ships, the cruel pirates' prey?
But hark! I lade them now with swords and spears.
Let them come on, I say, I fear them not.

Enter ALCIBIADES, SOCRATES, *and* EUCLID.

Alcib. This is an inn. What have we here? a madman!
Why, surely, he is frantic.

Euc. Fear him not,
He is quite harmless, Alcibiades.
My daughter's favorite messenger. *(To Zadok.)* Here, friend,
Eudora has a garment made for you.

Zad. 'Tis like her goodness; but she needs
Far more than I do, Euclid. [it more,

Euc. Nay, not so;
She has sufficient, though the costly robes
You promised her are lost.

Zad. Sufficient, hah!
She will need armor, if you'd have her pass
Through this vile world unscathed. I saw it,
E'en in her hand; plain! oh! how plain it was.

Euc. What didst thou see? Here's money—let us hear.
(To Socrates) I sometimes deem his prophecies are true:
Poor man! his art has been right dearly bought.
In him you see a man who once was great—
The first of Memphian merchants. None more rich
Or proud. To me it seems but yesterday
When he was all in all. He has twice held
Our honored seat of justice. Six years back—
No, by my word 'tis eight, for I then lost
My dearest wife—Meroth was in the city.
Some people fancied Zadok favored Meroth.
I heard it at our civic feast reported
That they were relatives. That self-same year
There was a famine also, I remember—
'Tis well he cannot—'twas his worst on earth!
It beggared him, and saw his family
Swept off by pestilence. He, too, was sick,
And from his bed arose a maniac!
The harshness of his fate his temper changed
From mild to stern, though to a favored few
He's docile as a child. Why, my Eudora
Frequent employs him, and he executes
With ludicrous importance her commands.
(To Zadok.) Come; let us hear it, friend.

Zad. Why, e'en an idiot might instruct ye, Euclid!
Shame on your wisdom. Can ye not perceive
She is defenceless?—that the smallest thorn
On life's intricate path may lacerate
Her tender limbs? Teach her yourself, old man,
What sorrow is. The world's a schoolmaster
Too callous far for one so mild and good.
Teach her yourself, I say;—buy armor, man!

Soc. Poor man! His own experience speaks
He had no armor, and he feels for all [in this.
He fancies are exposed.
(Socrates offers Zadok money, which he refuses.)

Euc. Nay, he is proud;
He will accept it though. This gentleman
Requires your skill.

Soc. Pride in adversity,
Deep-rooted passion. He would seem to earn
Rather than to solicit. As a merchant
He still would sell his wares; nor seek for
Without conferring on his customer [wealth,
A just equivalent. 'Tis to his honor.
(Socrates offers his hand to Zadok.)

Zad. No! In your evil eye I'll read your acts.
Anger fierce is sparkling there,
Pride and malice, but no fear!
There's a wrinkle lust hath ploughed;
Every passion there has glowed;
Not a virtue can I trace!
Away!—thine is a demon's face! [fool,

Alcib. 'True, as the Delphian oracle. Here,
Exert your power here. If I may judge
Your talent from the sample you have shewn,
Your searching scrutiny will find enough
To satirize in me. *(Zadok looks on Alcibiades.)*

Zad. Nature's built a palace fair,
Let nought evil enter there.
Eagle's eye and lion's heart;
Never from the truth depart.
Of ambition's lures beware,
For her crown's a crown of care.

Alcib. We have no *crown* in Athens. He has
My failings justly. But for Socrates! [judged
Why, he's as far from truth as earth from heav'n,
East from the west, or we from Syracuse.

Soc. Nay, say not so, for in my youth I had
Even those passions he so justly rates;
'Tis true philosophy has chastened them,—
At least, I trust so,—and though paid he scorned
To flatter me.

Alcib. That's a fair proof of madness.

Soc. Reason! dost thou not blush to hear those words? *(To Zadok.)*
Thy virtue's rare; I'll double thy reward.
(Socrates gives more money to Zadok).

Alcib. What! are you not content? The character
Which he has drawn for you is surely worth
No more than you first paid. If he were sane,
He would deserve to lose his reason now
For what he spake of you. Nor do I doubt

But that such envious thoughts have drawn on
The vengeance of the Gods. [him
Soc. Were man to judge
And arbitrate betwixt himself and heav'n,
Of all creation he would be the jest,
And in his abject wretchedness return
The inauspicious boon. And, though the Gods
May punish man's misdeeds, 'tis not for us
To shun the guilty, much less strive to hurl
The ever-dreaded bolt of mighty Jove.
No; we should rather those console on whom
Its fury lights,—those who, as criminals,
Have suffered that which we ourselves deserve.
'Tis heav'n's to punish,—it is man's to pity.
Euc. You must not heed him; he is quite insane,
Although sometimes his arrow hits the mark.
(To Alcib.) But this is your abode; though I could wish
Your company to night. I'll introduce you.
This is a gentleman from Thebes, by name
Menes; and this is Ptolycus—bless me!—
A little playful boy, and now a man—
Well, well, how time slips by! This, sir, is Pso- [phis,
Who understands full well the theory
Of life in Egypt, if I'm not mistaken.
Gentlemen, this is Alcibiades,—
My friend, the captain of the Grecian fleet.
Alcib. I think with one a prior right I claim,
A traveller's introduction.
Men. Sir, the same.
I beg to thank you for your courtesy
This morn, permitting me to view your ship.
Alcib. You were most welcome.
Euc. Well, farewell to-night.
To-morrow you will sojourn at my house.
[*Exeunt Euclid and Socrates, Zadok follows.*
(He points towards Socrates as he exits.)
Zad. That's a wrong invoice. Though the ship is worn,
The cargo's precious. Oh! my brain! my brain! [*Exit Zadok.*
(Alcibiades retires with Menes.)
Psop. I thought the Greeks were savages.
Ptol. They are so.
I'll bet my life he never tasted wine.
Psop. Stake something of more value; that's
To any but yourself. [no use
Ptol. Neither is yours. [rian,
Psop. Well, let us patronize the poor barba-
As he is Euclid's friend. And whilst he's here,
Shew him all courtesy.
Ptol. Well, well; agreed.

Enter Attendants with fruit, wine, &c.

Psop. This fruit is withered; for your house's fame
I pray you bear it swiftly from my sight;
The smell too is infectious—odious,
Enough to breed a pestilence—on honor!
Ptol. Think you that we can patronize your
If thus you treat your guests? [inn
Psop. 'Tis dreadful!—see how ill those cates are served!
Alcib. (aside.) What! are you there?
Ptol. 'Tis well we're here, he might impose on you,
Most gracious Alcibiades; but we
Will see you 'tended even as ourselves.
Alcib. Boy! There are animals to which this wine
Might be a luxury; with me 'tis useless.
Say, keep you swine in Egypt?
Atten. Sir, we do.
Alcib. Here, take it them; I'll rob them not. [boy?
What better rhymes than wine and swine, my
If Circe's tale be true, both words and things
Rarely or never sundered. As you go,
Send me my servant hither. [*Exit Attendant.*
Psop. Truly, Menes,
These couches weary one; as hard and firm
As the foundation of a pyramid.
Would that I had my Tyrian ottoman
Filled with the feathers of Arabia's swans!
Alcib. Athenians use the cygnet's down alone. [deemed you Greeks
Ptol. From what I've heard, I always
Denied yourselves life's delicate delights.
And lived—excuse the term—like wild barba- rians.
Alcib. Why, in some parts, ('tis true they do exist—
Not live—it is not life, but bare existence;
Wise men, you now would sooner die;) in Sparta
They eat with zest what well-bred dogs would
But I am an Athenian. [snarl at.

Enter Grecian Sailor.

Go to my steward for some Chian wine,
And fetch my Persian wrapper, lined with sables.
I would not let my monkey use this couch
Without some 'fence to guard him.
[*Exit Grecian Sailor.*
Psop. (Aside.) What think you of this captain?
Ptol. (Aside.) He surpasses
The most fastidious of us, that's sure.
Alcib. Dear me! but this is horrible, in-
All. What? What? [deed!
(Alcibiades throws the plate out of the casement.)
Alcib. An almond with a nauseous worm enclosed!
Atten. (Aside.) He should be served by squirrels if he wants
Trifles like that detected.
Alcib. (Attendant hands another plate.) No! No more!
I'll wait for the arrival of the wine.
You'll taste in it the soul of Grecian grapes;
I trust 'twill suit your palate.
Men. Sir, for one
I thank you kindly, but must plead excuse—
It is my time for rest. [also mine.
Ptol. (Menes and Ptolycus rise.) And
Psop. (Aside.) Nay, I'll off too. I'll not be left alone,
Or I perchance might follow that poor plate
For some most slight offence. *(Psophis rises.)*
Alcib. (To Psophis.) What, you as well!
Nay, part not so.

Psop. 'Tis the third watch of night.
Alcib. Well, at the galleys then you'll test its merits.
[*Exeunt Menes, Ptolycus, and Psophis.*
I would that Socrates had stayed. There were
No drug so potent as the sage advice
Which he would pour from his medic'nal lips
To physic your complaint. I've heard him oft
Denounce as moral death, soft luxury,
Saying that her lost votaries were men
Unworthy of a soul, since they neglected
The jewel for the mounting—gave the exterior case
Their whole attention; whilst th' immortal gem,
The mind, was left unpolished. But I trust
I've read these dolls a lesson which they'll heed,
At least till I depart. I hold it wise
To look down fools with their own folly's eyes.

SCENE II.

A Room in Euclid's House: a Flower-stand before the Casement.

CALMAR *solus tending the Flowers.*

Cal. Well, now my task is done, my labor's o'er.
Task did I say? Oh! love! thy labor's bliss!
Thou art a master whom thy slaves adore,
A conqueror whose captives court their chains.
Thy prison is a grot, where blooming hang
(All glowing like the rosy tinted morn)
The blushing firstlings of life's earliest fruit.
Thy territories are enchanted grounds,
And amorous shepherds rove delighted there,
Spell-bound with joy. There, on soft sighs, delight
Perfumes the fragrant airs, or melts in tears
Of speechless extacy, which, like pure dews,
Impregnate the rich ground; and bursting forth
In new and rare creations, seem to them
To gem this earth with hues surpassing heav'n's.
Ah! thou all-potent pow'r!—in every bud
Before my raptured eyes thou art enshrined.
Why reigns a charm inexplicable here?
Eudora's here; ye mirror her to me.
Her sunny smile I see in ye, which adds
New charms to nature's self. Ah! without her,
What unto me were Aden's emerald plains
Watered by living fonts? How can ye droop
When ye so often meet your mistress' face,
Blooming beneath her smile?—her joy-lit eye
Should, like the sun, strike life into the earth,
Revivifying all. The sterile land
Should in her presence teem; the rugged rock
For her should fringe his front with flow'rets sweet;
And desert sands on roses bed her feet.
[*Exit Calmar.*

Enter EUCLID, ALCIBIADES, *and* SOCRATES.
Euc. Well, gentlemen, the palace-girdled queen
Hath ope'd her arms to you; I've shewn her glories!
What think you of them, worthy Socrates?
Soc. If stone could speak, your city were immortal.
Euc. At least it speaks our labors.
Soc. Add to that
Your genius—though your temples lack that
That excellence of finish, and of taste, [grace,
We Greeks so much admire. True, in size
They are colossal, and appear more like
The ancient labors of Titanian giants
Than works of men like us.
Alcib. They will outlive
Aught we can boast in Greece.
Soc. Not so, rash youth.
Have we not Marathon to herald us
To the remotest age?
Alcib. A barren plain!
Soc. No, sir, no barren plain. An altar, sir!
A mighty altar, where a hecatomb
Was offered at the shrine of Liberty.
Alcib. 'Tis where the Greeks, under Miltiades,
O'erthrew the Persian host—
Soc. And taught the world
That wealth, and arms, and numbers, were no shields
To shelter tyrants from the swords of freemen.
Euc. 'Tis not a work of art. Yon sacred
Will ever linger in its fruitful bed, [stream
E'en you'll admit, should Isis temple fall
And once again commingle with the dust.
Soc. What hallows it, that you thus term it sacred?
Euc. It is the epithet all use. Osiris
Sends, through its means, the choicest blessings to us.
Besides, our magi, learned and divine,
Have taught us it is holy.

Enter Messenger, who delivers a scroll to ALCIBIADES *and exit.*
Soc. The priests, you mean.
Euc. Three now, the first of them, are in the city.
Great Meroth, first of these, is said to own
Attendants from the Gods.
Alcib. Of whom spoke you?
Euc. Of the lord Meroth.
Alcib. Here's a scroll from him,
A courteous invitation; written, too,
In fairest Grecian characters. Perchance
'Twas an "attendant genius" who inscribed it.
(*Alcibiades hands the scroll to Socrates.*)
Soc. 'Tis general, and most courteously expressive.
(*To Euclid*) Will you peruse, or are our cha-
To you a silent oracle? [racters
Euc. Oh no!
I learned to read and to indite your language,
That I might study Thales of Miletus. [mind
Soc. What marble can endure with such a
The test of time? 'Tis well you mentioned him;
You struck upon a Grecian column there.
Euc. Compare our works of art with works of art;
Say in what way your temples may compare
With ours in Egypt?

Soc. Why, in them, 'tis true
We must resign the palm to you for grandeur,
For yours are wonders.
Euc. Well, well, thanks for that.
If to my study you will follow me,
We'll there compare our sages.
Soc. Fairer far
Than earth may pile upon its fellow clay
The trophies of the mind. Th' inspired Homer,
Like his own Agamemnon, there commands:—
Father of history and foe of time!
Herodotus, who from oblivion's grasp [cay?
Hath plucked a thousand years—can these de-
Or who can doubt but that when Athens falls,
Solon will shine in gold!

SCENE III.

The same.

Enter EUDORA *and* ALCIBIADES.

(Alcibiades has the scroll.)

Eud. I thank you for your gracious offer, sir;
Though truly fear forbids me to accept it.
Alcib. What do you fear? We Greeks scarce know the term;
'Tis one we seldom use. But were you right,
(That is, should your surmise be verified,)
And this great magian will incline to shew
The mysteries of his art, be sure, for one,
That I will learn my fate.
Eud. Oh, tempt it not!
Leave that to heaven's cognizance alone.
I've heard most strange and awful words of Meroth:
Nay, more; my father oft hath doubts expressed
That he his knowledge hath obtained by means
The most unholy. That the ministers
He owns are such—I almost dread to name—
Spirits of darkness! Do not seek, for who
Could gain aught good from evil ministers?
Alcib. You reason well; but though a fury
In horrid majesty to bar my way, [stood
If it were truth,—could I the future learn,
I'd brave her scourge to know it.
Eud. Hold, I pray!
But if you will on this adventure rush,
I have a holy HEBREW TALISMAN,
His pupil Calmar's gift. Around your neck
I pray you place it, and may Isis guard you!
Alcib. You will not, then, to this rich magian's
Methinks, if I were liable to fear [palace?
I should beseech your guard and guidance there
To awe inferior angels.
Eud. Your remark
On lighter themes with me might wake a smile,
But jesting suits not on such dang'rous ground:
I shall not go with you—but after—when—
I deem—but do not—do not tempt your fate
With that mysterious man. I see your eye
Ungallantly denies my first request—
But to resume; when you have seen your course,
I'll meet you at the palace.

Enter ZADOK *unheard.*

Zad. Hah! is it thus? No, no! ye gods, forbid it! [*Exit Alcibiades.*
Zad. You love this man!
Eud. What, Zadok, are you there?
Zad. You love this man!
Eud. I love you Zadok, well;
See what I have for you.
(Gives Zadok a garment.)
Zad. Beware! beware!
I told you the truth. Nature has built a dome
A god might dwell in; but, Eudora, hark!
A ravenous wolf's its tenant.
Eud. Oh, hush! hush!
You must not speak so, Zadok, of your friends.
Zad. 'Tis true; I must speak truth; do not believe!
You must not go, I say: I heard it all.
Eud. I would obey you willingly, if—
Zad. If he
Would not adventure; 'tis a just account!
Your blushes speak.
Eud. Zadok, you're most unkind.
Zad. No; not to you.
Eud. You are, but know it not.
I want your service now, to fetch for me
Some grain from Meroth's granaries.
Zad. Meroth's!
Eud. The palace granaries; you know them well;
You are at home there; I've heard Calmar say
That all there 's free to you.
Zad. Yes, all save him!
Eud. You must not speak 'gainst Meroth.
To you he is most kind. [Calmar says
Zad. A brother's love!
Eud. Nay, surely that you can't expect from
Zad. Why not? [Meroth.
Eud. Question me not, but leave me, Zadok, now.
Below, the noontide meal for you is spread.
[*Exit Zadok.*
(Eudora approaches a flower noticed by Alcibiades.)
Eud. That is his favorite. 'Tis purely blue;
But he's as false as shadows on the wave.
Shame on the thought! Truth's throned upon his brow,
And honor decks his form with majesty.
You foolish heart, give o'er!—He loves you not.
But how is this? This fair acacia
Is propped anew; it must be Bäara.
How oft I've told her, since she broke the lotus,
To leave them to my care—perhaps the maid
Here shews her sorrow in this kind attempt
To win my favor back. [*Exit Eudora.*

Re-enter ALCIBIADES *holding the talisman.*

Alcib. Is she not here?
Nay, then, I'll take the bauble; though the curse
Of Isis, or her blessing, weighs with me
Light as a feather on the northern blast.
Would that I could so self-deluded trust
This magian's boasted art! How more than slow
Time's lazy shade would o'er the dial crawl
Till I beheld my bold triumphant course.
For it must be triumphant—shall be bold—

But should it not? Why, then—the sorcerer
In vice or virtue I will reign supreme; [lies!
Preach me no middle course. Come life or death,
Fate weave the woof; but I, in thy despite,
Will leave a glorious track for future worlds
To gaze at and admire.

SCENE IV.

A Hall in MEROTH'S *Palace. Time, Night.*

MEROTH *solus.*

Meroth. The night is dark; but darker far that night
Which broods upon my weary-laden soul!
What is the pinnacle from whose proud top
I look upon the wrath of kings, and smile?
What is the purple robe, the power of art,
The light of science, and the dream of fame,
Whilst fell remorse is *here?* Nor dare I cast
One look upon the bold and bloody track
Of my presumptuous course, whilst o'er my head
Hangs, like a beetling crag, or avalanche,
The future—shadowy, dark, and unexplored.
Even the present's fraught with ills for me!
Thrice have I sought great Memphis' lofty walls,
And thrice have famine dire and pestilence
Dogged mine accursed steps—A city's groans
Prepared by fate to soothe and lull my couch:
Whilst far and near disease's sentinels,
Watchful, dim-twinkling through the misty night
From pestilential chambers, faintly shew
Death's footprints in each woe-surchargèd house.
The meanest hind would not exchange his rags
For all my power, wealth, and majesty,
If he could lift the gaudy robe, and read
The tortures of this agonizèd heart.

Enter CALMAR.

How speed the revels, Calmar?
Calmar. At their height.
In brimming cups they hail; e'en now their
Ring in mine ear. Hark! [shouts
Shouts without. To the star of Meroth!
Cal. Only one thing is wanting; they request
The favour of your presence.
Mer. Not to-night.
This night the magi meet to seek the will
Of Egypt's angry Gods. Say, is Arbaces here?
Cal. He waits your presence in the hall, my lord.
Mer. Send him to me, I would commune with him. [*Exit* CALMAR.

Enter ZADOK.

(Aside.) What, are you here?—he haunts me like a curse. [Zadok!
My brother—Meroth's brother—madman
Were he aught else, I could have borne the shame.
(Aloud.) Well, sir, what would you? are you yet prepared
To leave for fair Chaldea? Would that I
Could quit mine office and its cumbrous pomps,
And, as a shepherd, rove *again* with joy
Her flower-gemmed meads!
Zad. *Again!*—Said'st thou *again?*
Then all my dreams and all my hopes are true.
You are———
Mer. The magian *Meroth!*
Zad. Nay, not so!
His name was *Oran*—we were twins—but time
And misery have conquered one—
Mer. (Aside.) And both!
Zad. He was most wise. Yes! he could track the stars
Through their high orbits in the shining sky.
They said that he was proud, but unto me
He ever was most kind. I see him oft,
Lingering by Elud's well to wait for her
He loved. He often visits me in dreams.
Mer. They are but dreams. Would'st thou behold him yet,
Go to Chaldea—I will speed you there.
Zad. Not now, not now; my fleet has just arrived.
I cannot leave the port. When they depart,
I'll visit home once more.
Mer. Well, be it so.

Enter ARBACES.

Zad. Yes, yes! I feel—I know I shall behold
My home once more—once more! [*Exit Zadok.*
Mer. What says the metre?—Does the river rise?
Arb. It rises not; though from some certain signs
We may expect it will 'ere long. The wind
Swift from the north hath driven in our port
Some stranger galleys, Grecian by their form;
And should it last, we may have cause to hope.
Mer. No hope from thence! I tell thee—'tis despair!—
Arb. Despair! their force is nothing. Why, your guards
Would over-rank their muster, should they dare
To compass an attack upon the city.
Mer. 'Tis not the city's fate I dread, Arbaces!
Arb. If not for that, I cannot guess what cause
You have to fear these wild barbarians.
Mer. Barbarians!—not so; for one of those
Whom you despise o'ertops all Egypt's lore.
Our country's rank is lost upon the earth.
Arb. That she can never lose whilst Meroth lives!
Mer. 'Tis true, she might not. We shall seek to-night
The will of angry heav'n; and should the Gods
Demand a sacrifice, why should we drain
The blood of Egypt?—'twas an ancient rule
To slay an alien.—Dost thou understand me?
Arb. Are there not other means? Why, such a cause
Would dignify an act which *seems* a crime.
Mer. Speak not of that to me—it cannot be,
Though 'twere a worthy deed; nor could I see

A crime in that, if with a single eye
To Egypt's good 'twere done.
Arb. (Aside.) That is my cue;
I know that glance,—and its command's obeyed!
Mer. Before th' assembled magi I'll unfold
All that I have divined. Oh! my Arbaces!
You know my labors—know what years of toil
I've spent in quest of lore—what dangers vast
I've braved, which others blenched at—staked my all—
Nay, risked my very soul! 'Twas all for fame—
But even that's denied.
Arb. Denied?—not so!
The world your merit owns. Golden rewards
In glittering profusion have been showered
Upon your brilliant course. You early gained,
And worthily, that which has rarely pressed
Aught save the snowy locks of toil-worn age—
The highest dignity—the noblest crown
Of Egypt, first of nations. What though now
An adverse planet threats? The mind you
In youth, my lord, at such an obstacle [owned
Would have rejoiced, not feared.
Mer. That time is past; and certain 'tis, the mind
Doth with its frailer tenement decay.
The slow sure sap of ever-lab'ring time
Weakens both mortal and immortal parts
Of our imperfect being. Wherefore smile you?
Arb. I smile to think that you should speak of age
In manhood's prime—in the unclouded blaze
Of your meridian sun.
Mer. Think you that age
Alone brings on our end?—that years alone
May stamp our brows with wrinkles?—No, Arbaces;
There are more powerful agents far than these.
The heart-sick weariness of hope deferred
Wracks in an hour more than days of toil;
The labor of the o'erstrained mind outwears
In minutes her frail habitation more
Than months of meaner care. The shocks of fate
In moments often do the work of years;—
And I have known them all.
Arb. To conquer them.
Mer. Aye, in my earlier years; but they are fled.
Adversity attends her victor youth,
Dragged captive at his car;—but if on age
She plants her mailèd foot, its iron weight
Accumulates; and every grain is felt
Until she sinks her victim. Even now
The mind which ruled the wisest of the age
For ten long courses of the burning sun,—
Which smiled at danger in its direst form
Even in boyhood,—now begins to flag,
And seeks a friend on whom to rest its cares,
To throw its cumbrous load of earthly pomps
Which have outworn their wearer. Then content,
I'd lay aside those gewgaws I despise.
But I'll not have my sceptre wrenched and torn
By faction from my bleeding grasp, nor yield
To force that throne which in my youth not one
Dare fearless tenant,—e'en in fancy's dream.
Arb. Nor ever will—without your high permission;
For, though divided, still the council rest
Their dearest hopes on you. Why, even Irad
Admits your high pre-eminence—
Mer. I care not.
He may inherit—if he will—my fame;
Would he had bought it at as dear a price!
You know my will:—come, let us to the council.

SCENE V.

The Hall of the Magi, with a statue of Osiris in the centre.

Magians seated around. Three Thrones unoccupied. Choristers and Attendants.

Enter MEROTH.

1*st Chor.* Prince of the wise! lord of the silver star!
To whom the realm of haughty Typhon opes
Its adamantine gates: whose dread commands
The pow'rs invisible obey, all hail!
All. All hail!

Enter ARBACES.

2*nd Chor.* Lord of the keys of fate! at whose behest
Oblivion dark unlocks her treasured stores
And re-awakes the past. Before whose eye
The visioned future's borne on wingèd dreams;
Whose knowledge in the paths of fate transcends
All other mortal wisdom, hail! all hail!
All. All hail!

Enter IRAD.

3*rd Chor.* Lord of the sacred fire! to whom the lore
Of Trismegistus and of Hermes wise,
The might of Cham, the art of Tubal Cain,
Are but familiar things: whose skill commands
The secrets of the Cabala, all hail!
All. All hail!
Choristers. All hail the lords of science and of lore!
Whose fame will last till time shall be no more.
The stars propitious heralded their birth,
The glory and the wisdom of the earth.
Mer. The wisdom of the earth!
What's in that title? 'Tis but vanity,
Although we may not claim it. Brethren! Lords!
I heard it from those lips which dare not lie:
The sun hath not performed his annual course
Since I this truth obtained. 'Twas when fierce Mars
Bathed his red orb in Mithra's purer ray
I did erect my scheme, and every spell
Of potent efficacy wrought to find
The sage most worthy on the face of earth
Of honour and of fame.
For thrice three days untiringly I strove
Without an answer from the Gods: at last

The haughty Baal responded. "Search," said he,
"The spot that was and will be Persia's grave;
There shalt thou find the object of thy quest:
Or, if thou wilt, remain, for he to thee
Shall come, ere thrice yon silver moon hath waned
('Twas then at full), and answer thy demands."
Thus hath our hope, our glory, gone from us,
Which we so vainly thought our cares had wrought. [fathomed,

Irad. The well of truth can ne'er by us be
How much less emptied. Nought deteriorates
Or can reduce the value of our prize.
Rather should we rejoice there is another
Who can with justice claim some share in that
Which Egypt thought her own. By Hermes, I
Most cheerfully would cede my throne to him
Who could advance me to the grand arcanum,
That summit of the mount of alchymy.

Arb. What, shall our crown be yielded?—that which time
To us hath sanctified? No; rather let
Fair science' queen be sunk beneath the wave,
And art and lore with her, forgotten, die!
Methought no warring or dissentient voice
Could wake in such a cause to clothe our shame
With sophistry or reason misapplied. [this:
What need of further words? My counsel's
Should this forthcoming sage be not of us,
It is expedient, for our country's good,
That there should be a victim to the Gods;
And we well know the custom was of yore
That this dread lot should on an alien fall.
If this be so, and so our records prove,
Why not as well to sacrifice this man,
Lest other nations overcome our art
And bear the palm from Egypt? If of us,
We may acquire new knowledge from his lips,
And own him as a brother. I have said.

Irad. Your art to me is not unseen. As you,
I well can read the country which can boast
Itself the Persian's grave, and also know
Our mysteries are to the Greeks a blank.
Nor is there one of us, or of our order,
Who emanates from thence; therefore that hope,
So seeming gracious, is a broken reed
In which we cannot trust: and I, as one,
Nor meanest even here, will never urge
Or sanction the revival of a law [blot
Which stains our annals. Shall we strive to
And sully that which we may not attain?
No; rather let us learn. Humility
Distinguishes the truly wise from those
Who ape their knowledge. It were sacrilege
To harm the stranger even; when to that
We add the title of "the worthiest,"
At such an act all nature would cry out,
And history would brand the deed with shame,
Blushing to speak our praise.

Mer. Curb your free speech;
Remember we are suppliants, not accusers.
The parched and sterile land in gaping chinks
Opens a thousand mouths in pray'r, whilst we
Debase ourselves and waste our words in wrath.
Methinks the holy cause for which we meet
Is one whose sanctity should bar our breasts
From such unhallowed feelings. Th' offended Gods
Frown on our guilty land. Three seasons now
Have passed since earth hath in her womb withheld
Her usual increase, and the city's stores
Will hardly hold us should the river rise,
Which Apis grant, at its accustomed time.
The great Osiris
Ourselves we will consult. The sacrifice,
If claimed of us, is for our country's good;
Hallowed be Heav'n's choice! Now let the choir
Awake the notes of praise whilst we beseech
An answer from the mighty God Osiris.

(MEROTH *kneels before the statue, and the Choristers chant the following hymn.)*

(A burst of music.)

The harps of gold! the harps of gold!
For great Osiris' praise
Let sackbuts sweet and trumpets bold
The swelling chorus raise.
Join all your voices to proclaim
The God of Egypt's glorious name.

(Plaintive.)

Thou art Egypt's great defender,
Thou art Egypt's sword and shield;
In her woe do thou befriend her,
Cause her enemies to yield.
Thou art mighty,
Thou art Egypt's sword and shield.

For thy mercy we implore thee,
Hear, oh! hear thy people's pray'r;
Save us ere we fall before thee,
And thy chosen people spare.
Save, oh save us!
And thy chosen people spare.

The harps of gold! the harps of gold! &c.
(Repeated.)

Mer. To thee, protector of this favored land,
We call for mercy, and from thee beseech
An answer to our pray'rs.

(The statue of Osiris becomes illumined, exhibiting on its base certain Egyptian characters, which MEROTH *reads aloud.)*

"TWO VICTIMS TO THE GODS THE DESTINIES DEMAND
ERE NILE'S BLUE WATERS RISE O'ER EGYPT'S PROSTRATE LAND;
WHEN IN HER WAVES YOU CAST YOUR BEAUTY AND YOUR LORE,
THE PESTILENCE SHALL CEASE, THE FAMINE LEAVE YOUR SHORE!"

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A magnificent Hall in MEROTH'S *Palace, shaped like three sides of a pentagon; the back enclosed with curtains.*

Enter ALCIBIADES, EUCLID, *and* SOCRATES.

Alcib. This is indeed a sumptuous pile!
'Tis noble, and within superb. [Without
Euc. You're now
In the famed hall I spoke of.
Alcib. What? where he,
The magian, divines?
Euc. The same; he comes.

Enter MEROTH.

Mer. Euclid! your presence honors my poor house,
And, worthy gentlemen, to Egypt welcome.
But yesterday I heard of your arrival,
Although I knew that we might soon expect you.
Alcib. 'Twere wrong in us, sir, to forestall your kindness;
Your words to us apply not. We were not
Bound to the port of Memphis.
Mer. Your intent
Might be to make another, but this harbour
Your destination was. It was to that
Alone my words referred.
Alcib. Not six days past
Our galleys held their course for Syracuse,
But adverse winds prevailing, we were forced
To seek a shelter in your friendly port.
But how (to use a stranger's privilege)
Could you have *known* our destination here?
Mer. I had divined it. Long ere yonder sun
Had the pale Pleiads with his glory crowned
I was of it forewarned; and furthermore,
To prove that this is no vainglorious boast,
I've learned that in your honored ship you bore
The wisest of the Greeks; which fact to you
Perchance is also known.
Alcib. Indeed!
I should have doubted, (for I'm given much
To sceptical opinions on such points,)
But that I know that Greece can boast of none
To whom that title is more clearly due
Than unto one whom I will now present—
My worthy master, Socrates.
Soc. You know,
Most noble sir, it is a trick of youth
To deem him sage from whom their infant minds
Have gathered learning; and as such, I pray,
Excuse my pupil's boldness, claiming thus
A title which I deem too glorious far
For my unworthy self.
Mer. Your modesty
But proves your wisdom greater; for the man
Who deems he's wise shews he lacks wit far more
Than he who sees his folly; but he who sees
And probes his weakness to its utmost depth,
Then, like a good physician, swift applies
The remedies it needs,—he has attained
A height which e'en few modern sages reach.
(To Alcib.) So you, sir, doubt the powers of
Of which fame calls me master? [the art
Alcib. I entreat
Your pardon for the words; but they are said,
Nor can they be by me recalled with honor.
Mer. Were you in Egypt long, I think you'd
All such opinions vanish. [find
Alcib. I have heard
Of your much famed diviners from the ships
Which trade with us from the Arabian coast;
But the voluptuous Asiatics deal
In marvels, and the demarcation line
'Twixt truth and fiction oft is hard to find.
Mer. It is, indeed. I was deceived myself
In early life. That which in youth appeared
A god is now a phantom. But your doubts
I will essay to clear, should you consent,
(Without your will the trial would be vain,)
And trace your course in this sublunar sphere.
(Meroth motions with his hand: the curtains at back open, and disclose a raised platform with several vases around it marked as follows: Hatred, Ambition, Love, Glory, Pride of Art, Pride of Science, Avarice, Fame, &c.)
Mer. Ashtaroth!
(The Familiar appears on the platform; Alcibiades draws his sword.)
Mer. Spare your strength!
The subtle air would more resistance yield
To your sharp sword than that familiar.
But I rejoice to see you are so prompt,
So free from taint of fear; for oft I'm foiled,
When slavish terror with a coward's gripe
Hurls reason from her throne—denying me
The knowledge of the ruling principle,
Without which knowledge all my art is vain.
Alcib. Ashtaroth!
(Alcib. places his sword on a couch.)
He is not mortal. By what potent spell
Dost thou compel him to obey thy word?
Mer. I would inform thee; nay, would teach
I've learned by ages of untiring toil. [thee all
The secrets of the wise—from him who wrought
And bent the stubborn metals to his will,
The wondrous Cain—to him who now unfurls
Thy little chart of life. Nay more, I'd yield

All mysteries which I've acquired or learned
By practices forbidden—where our wise
Have, danger-daunted, paused:—shew thee the wine
Whose precious drops preserve from fell disease
The house of life. The ever-burning lamp—
The sage's stone—the Jewish cabala
Should swell thy store of knowledge. All I'd give,
For once again to start upon life's course
In youth's gay prime as thou. But ah! alas!
'Tis what thou canst not grant nor I attain.

Soc. I thought that wisdom taught her votaries
To bear the shocks of fate. To judge from years,
My age would claim the precedence in death,
If it be that you dread; though to the wise
Death is the gate of life.

Mer. You reason false;
'Tis as we use our wisdom.

Soc. Pardon me;
True wisdom's always based on virtue's rock.
He who, endowed with genius or with lore,
Who (like an eagle 'mongst the meaner birds)
Outstrips his fellows, is not always wise.
He may abuse his pow'rs, pervert their aim,
And where he should confer upon his kind
The choicest blessing, only leave a curse.
He is not wise; he knowledge may possess,
But wisdom is its application right.

(Alcibiades approaches the platform and examines the vases during this dialogue.)

Mer. (to Alcib.) Well, sir, which of those vases holds the fire
Will answer your behest? Though 'twould be right
To ask the master to advance the first,
And try the ground before the pupil ventures.
(to Soc.) Say which of those fine subtle essences,
Those qualities which fill this breathing world,
Have you most tasked your pow'rs to attain?

Soc. I cannot choose. I do not see that here
Which I have labored to attain; that is,
If we may term that labor which the soul
Delights in more the more it is pursued.

Mer. Few mortals but can find a whetstone
On which their energies are keenest set. [here

Soc. If it were here, I should not test its
I hold it as impiety to strive [pow'r.
To learn those things o'er which heav'n's veil is drawn. [vain.

Mer. I will not press you—it indeed were
The seeker's will must second my attempt.
Where that is not, our art cannot compel
The destinies' responses. Worthy Euclid,
Perchance you'll try the wand, though none could doubt
The vase whose flame will answer your behest.

Euc. Must I make preference? or will the fire
Of one alone awake at my command?

Mer. One only will respond; the pow'r which holds
Most sovereign sway in the enquirer's heart.

(Euclid touches several; at the Pride of Science the flame ignites and Euclid steps back.)

Euc. 'Tis fearful!

Alcib. Nay, 'tis beautiful!
See how the smoke around the future rolls
Like purple clouds on high Olympus peak,
Shrouding the Gods from mortals.

(As the smoke rises Ashtaroth speaks.)

Ash. Lift the veil from future years,
Rich with gore and sweet with tears;
Joy's brief moments there I see
Blent with years of misery;
Virtue counselling in vain
Sin and sorrow, guilt and shame.
War with her companions dire,
Famine, pestilence, and fire;
But as time speeds on its flight,
We must track its course in light:
Stop the rolling ball of earth,
Wake, Sicilia! into birth!

SCENE I.—*The Romans before Syracuse.*

See the Roman eagle there,
Hov'ring high in middle air!
See the tents upon the plain!
See the galleys on the main!
Who that fatal swoop may stay?
Why, Marcellus, this delay?
Archimedes wards her doom—
Euclid stops the march of Rome!

(Scene vanishes.)

Pass like smoke, ye phantoms, pass
In confusion's mingled mass!
Bubbles, dreams, and mockeries,
Painted shadows, gaudy lies;
Cowards, bullies, fools and sages
Of the Greek and Roman ages;
Clay-built Cæsars, haste away,
Gods of earth, in dust decay!
Subjects, monarchs, blent in one,
To oblivion hurry on!

Pass like smoke, ye phantoms, pass
In confusion's mingled mass!
Chivalry is prancing now:
Hark! her bondsmen shriek below.
Wrapt in ignorance's cloud,
Frenzied martyrs, bigots' crowd,
Puppet kings and toiling slaves,
Lying prophets, holy knaves,
Monstrous nothings of your day,
In a smoke-wreath fleet away!

SCENE II.—*Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton appear here.*

But thou, Copernicus! what time
Shall bound thy destined fame?
Or Kepler, tracker of the spheres,
Who shall thy deeds proclaim?
Conjoined with these, of both the sum,
See Newton, Science' darling son!

(They vanish.)

Of the proud column of their praise,
Euclid! thy genius formed the base.

Pass like smoke, ye phantoms, pass
In confusion's mingled mass!
What shall mortals here descry
In history's foul and blotted lie,
But vice triumphant, changing names
With vanquished virtue, bound in chains?
Yet shall art flourish in the strife,
And commerce soothe the woes of life.
Behold their triumph ere ye part,
See nature captive led by art!

SCENE III.—*A steam-vessel on the ocean.*

Through the waste
The vessel glides,
And o'er the waters
Gaily rides.
Yes! she rides, in triumph speeding,
Dashing through the sparkling spray;
On her trackless path proceeding,
Wind nor wave her course can stay.
Euclid's science,
Egypt's light,
Formed her swiftness,
Wrought her might. *(Scene van.)*

Close the veil o'er misery,
All the past is vanity;
All the present swift as thought,
All the future shall be nought.
Toil, and woe, and misery
Crowd the leaf of history;
But her purest page shall be
Science, ever claimed by thee;
And amid her sons shall shine
Euclid—founder of a line!

Euc. Oh! stay, illusion! once again I'd view
That glorious work by noble science wrought.
Mer. It may not be!—
Now youth and hope, read thou thy destiny.

(Gives the wand to Alcibiades, who touches the vase marked Glory, which ignites, and appears.)

SCENE I.—*A battle on land in Greece.*

Alcib. 'Tis mine! my noble charger, black
This cannot be delusion, for I know [Achilles!
His eye, his matchless form, his arched neck.
It is my swift Thessalian!
Mer. Peace! he speaks!
Ash. Go! slake thy thirst at Glory's font
Upon thy native plain;
Thy charger pants to hear thy voice,
He champs the bit in vain.
Away! seek thou the field of war,
Lead thou yon armèd host;
A victor's wreath awaits thee there,
On Grecia's distant coast.
(Scene vanishes.)

Alcib. Said'st thou a victor?
Soc. 'Tis o'er *Greeks*, remember!
Alcib. And what though Greeks they be,
Save that my valor earns a worthier meed
Than if they were barbarians?

SCENE II.—*A naval engagement.*

Ash. Whose shield o'erhangs yon foremost bark?
Whose form is on her deck?
The hero of the battle plain
Speeds swift at Glory's beck.
Again the foe before his might
Are scattered like the wind;
In vain they strive, in vain they fight—
A seaman's grave they find.

(As the 2nd scene slowly disappears Alcibiades exclaims,)

Alcib. Can I believe my senses? trust my sight?
There goes the Daphne, with her golden prow,
And there the Clytemnestra! She was mine!
I know her build! I've handled ev'ry shroud!
I sailed her when a boy—my first command.
Mer. Would'st thou behold the goddess of thy choice,
I'll animate her form; and thou shalt learn
From her own lips the dangers of thy path.

Invocation.

Phantom, spirit, rise! appear!
See, thy votary is here;
From thine aëry hall come down,
Tell the price of Glory's crown.

(Emblem of Glory, a beautiful female armed and veiled, appears.)

Alcib. What pow'r divine is this, with peerless form,
Prankt in a glittering veil, whose sparkling folds
Increase not hide her charms? Most wonderful!
See how she stands, arrayed like Pallas' self,
When, from the brain of cloud-compelling Jove,
Fresh as the morning into life she leapt,
Armèd in proof—triumphant.
Mer. 'Tis the type,
The shadowed emblem, of the queen you serve.
'Tis Glory's self—behold her! List! she speaks!

Glo. Youth! if thou would'st seek my smile,
Let nought else thy thoughts beguile;
Love nor fear thy steps mislead,
If from me thou'dst earn the meed.
Seek not, scorn the lust of pelf;
Thou must love me for myself.
Meaner passions yield to me,
If my beauty thou would'st see.
Other feelings rend away;
O'er the heart I hold my sway.
I to thee must be divine,
If thou'dst worship at my shrine.

Fear not thou to seek me, when
I am hid from meaner men.
In war's fierce and stormy blaze
Oft my glittering veil I raise;
In the battle's brunt thou'lt find,
To my lover I am kind.
In the broken ranks of death
Thou shalt feel my honey'd breath.
In the carcase-crowded breach
Clasp my form, 'tis in thy reach.

Plant thy standard in the gap;
I am wooed in Danger's lap.

Perils oft, by land and sea,
Wait on those who follow me;
Heed them not, but forward press,
Think what prize thine arms will bless.
Famine gaunt may guard the door;
Wasting plague and tortures sore
Wait thee on thy rapid race,
Speeding to my fond embrace.
Death may threaten,—scorn his pow'r
If thou'dst earn my matchless dow'r;
When thy brilliant course is run,
What is LIFE?—If I am won.

Alcib. What? art thou gone?
Mer. Aye, like a fleeting dream!
Soc. That was ambition's type, not virtuous fame's,
For that partakes the nature of the Gods,
And is, like them, eternal!
Mer. You have seen
That too which is eternal.
Soc. What I heard
Was evanescent as the morning's dew,
But harmful as the forkèd lightning's shaft.
Beware her smile! Earth-shaking conquerors
Might learn a lesson here, who for true fame
Too oft mistake that phantom, gaining but
The execration of the just and good,
Purchasing infamy with human gore.
I say, beware her smile!
Alcib. Ashtaroth speaks!
Ash. (to Alcibiades.)
In war's stern arts no equal shalt thou see;
In courtesy the meed shalt truly claim,
Lord of the Spartan in austerity,
And Prince in Persia of voluptuous fame.
Mer. You've seen your course; 'tis glorious!
Few have gained
Such answer from this oracle. But come!
We'll leave this place, and taste some Theban wine; [retire.
It will refresh us much. *(to Ash.)* You may
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The same.

Enter ALCIBADES *(for his sword).*

Alcib. Hah! here it is; the sceptre of my sway!
My visions, then, are true; my dearest hopes
Are soon to be fulfilled. I've heard my fate
Read by this powerful magian; yes, and seen
What I was born to execute; 'twas real!
I knew the spot—the galleys were familiar—
The very waves were Greek! My charger too
Like life—nay more—for it was life itself;
No fiction ever came so near creation.
Can it be true that I'm thus born to conquer?
"*In war no equal.*" Now by Mars I swear
To brace each nerve and fibre to the task,
Summon each energy of soul and body
To pluck down valour's wreath! No meaner thought
Shall desecrate this bosom; on my sword,
Fit altar for the oath, I swear to seek
No other meed than that which fame bestows,
Which lives, when he, whose brows it has adorned,
Sleeps in the arms of Glory.

Enter EUDORA.

Eud. Well; have you passed the ordeal?
Alcib. I have.
Eud. How your eyes glare! your countenance is flushed,
And every limb is quiv'ring with emotion.
What have you done? Oh! leave this fearful place.
Alcib. 'Tis nothing, dear Eudora; it is past!
Eud. Oh! say what sudden fear has moved you thus;
I thought you knew not what *that* feeling was.
Alcib. It was not fear; my thoughts reverted then
To the strange doings of this morn. 'Tis hard
(For one with such a nature as myself)
To yield an old opinion.
Eud. Ah! well I knew your doubts would vanish here;
But did your fortune equal your desires?
Alcib. It did; and I had almost said—exceeded.
But that I would retract.
Eud. Ah! now you're calmer.
I feared you'd tampered with the dreadful art,
And that—alas!—
Alcib. Oh, no!
But in that trial there's but little danger.
I was surprised: no quacklike mummery
Was here exhibited; 'twas simple all.
See—here's the place; we touched upon a vase,
And straight appeared the future to our view—
The bright and glorious future.
Eud. I deem you feared, but know you'll own it not;
But was it not most awful to behold?
Alcib. Awful? no, beautiful! I never saw
A scene so gorgeous: take the wand yourself;
I'll play the magian, and with roses strew
Your fairy path through this delightful world.
(Alcibiades places the wand in Eudora's hand, who touches several vases. At Love the light appears, and also Ashtaroth, the familiar, menacing Alcibiades, who holds Eudora on his left arm, his drawn sword in his hand.)

Enter MEROTH.

Mer. (To Alcib. ironically.) What meaneth this? Have you thus dared, rash boy?
Well, flesh your sword. Strike, Grecian! spare him not!
Ashtaroth, what strange mercy holds thine arm?
Alcib. (To the familiar.) Aye, advance!
Mer. You are adventurous thus to dare; but take

That trembling maiden to the hall without:
She swoons with terror.
Alcib. I knew not that this spirit would appear
Without your summons; though I fear him not. [*Exit Alcib. bearing Eudora.*
Mer. You were not wont to be thus merciful.
Ash. The Greek was armed.
Mer. You did not fear his sword!
Ash. His sword! Had that alone been his defence,
I had consumed him ere a prayer in thought
Had flashed upon his soul;—and of his wreck
No atoms here been left; but borne afar
Upon the viewless winds, in tempests whirled,
They had ere now been scattered o'er the globe!
But he had that both you and I must fear.
Mer. Indeed!
Ash. Around his neck a talisman was hung,
In form a cross; 'twas fashioned from the stone
Of Sinai—awful mount!
Mer. Awful indeed!
Thou speakest truth—that must command our fears.
'Tis well you spared the youth, to let him court
That phantom glory, which deludes his eye
To vanish in his grasp; but for the sage,
Would he could fall before thy wakened wrath.

(Meroth motions to Ashtaroth, who vanishes.)

Mer. Yes! he's woke every passion in this breast,
And wrought them into phrensy: now 'tis love,
Now anger flashes through this burning brain,
So swift, that scarce I know which rules me most,
To hate or to admire.
I see him now, as when he bearded me
E'en in this very hall. Can wisdom dwell
In such a habitation? 'tis a jest—
A mock'ry of man's form: but when he spake,
It seemed a temple worthy of a God!
He rated me with knowledge ill applied,
And I—I never saw my soul so black!
He is the mirror where I see my crimes.
No peace until I sweep him from the earth.
He forces me, whom demons dread, to face—
To shrink and cow'r from his searching glance;
Nay, he compels me 'gainst my will, to own,
And crouch beneath—the dignity of virtue!

SCENE III.

The Gardens of Isis by Moonlight.

Enter ARBACES *and* TIGRANES.

Arb. 'Tis not the temple makes the sacrifice;
The Gods demand "earth's lore,"—he is the man
Most learned. Fear not then to strike the blow,
I will protect you. See—they are approaching.
Tig. Why, there are three of them.
Arb. 'Tis only the old man—the foreigner
Is claimed of Egypt's Gods, and he must die!
Tig. They are armed.
Arb. Oh, fear not that.—You need not fight
But immolate your victim. [you know,
Tig. What is that?
You mean to murder him!
Arb. To m-u-r-der—no,
That's not the word—he's a devoted man!
'Twere just as worthy to officiate here
As in the holy temple—'tis no crime.
Tig. I like not mincing words. I'll murder
If such is your command. [him
Arb. Well! have it so:
But quick—secrete yourself—behind this tree!
[*Tigranes hides. Exit Arbaces.*

Enter ALCIBIADES, SOCRATES, *and* EUCLID.

Alcib. (Pointing to Arbaces.) That is some nobleman.
Euc. The lord Arbaces;
'Twas he who planned these gardens.
Alcib. Aye, indeed,
That is most praiseworthy, and must compel
The highest admiration for a state
Whose noblest cater thus to please their flock.
Euc. (To Socrates.) You're chary of your praise. What think you, friend,
Of Egypt's priests and nobles?—'tis their work.
Soc. 'Tis not without its merit. But were I
To arbitrate upon their excellence
As rulers, I would rather note how well
The human soil was tilled, would search how far
They had exceeded other nations in
The moral culture of the public mind
Ere I awarded them the highest praise.
Euc. These elevate the feelings, you'll admit.
But you should see our public promenades,
Our gay reviews, our sacerdotal pomps,
Processions, exhibitions, and the like,
Which even Medians have been heard to say
Are quite unequalled in magnificence.
Soc. Alas! I cannot praise them, for I know
They are too oft the gilding of the chain
Of slavery. The peasant is o'ertaxed
To feed these pomps, which ever most are seen
Where poverty and wretchedness abound.

(Alcibiades detects Tigranes, and passing round the tree behind which he is concealed, Tigranes retreats. Alcibiades points towards him and says to Euclid,)

Alcib. Who is that stranger, Euclid?—know you him?
He has a lowering look. I found him here
Lurking behind this shade, and listening.
Euc. A servant of the temple, called Tigranes.
[*Exeunt Euclid & Socrates.*
Alcib. He had a knife in hand when I advanced.
Ah! here is mischief: there's Arbaces yonder.
He hesitated too; I marked him eye that tree.
Well, we are armed, he shall not mar my sport.
[*Exit Alcibiades.*

Re-enter ARBACES *and* TIGRANES.

Arb. Well, you have seen him; let me hear
That he is dead. [to-night

Tig. Aye, murdered! that's the word. *(Aside)* He's not mentioned the reward; but I suppose the white-livered coward considers this temple duty. Never mind, I'll find a way to balance this account. [*Exit Tigranes.*

Arb. (solus.) 'Tis strange that I am thus o'ercome by Meroth:
He leads me captive at his will. I scorn
The loathsome task. "He could not see
A crime in it if done for Egypt's good."
'Twas a command—he'd have his thoughts
I do despise me to be made his tool; [obey'd.
Yet I so fear him, that were he to say
Slay him thyself, I dare not but obey.

SCENE IV.

Another view of the Gardens of Isis.

Enter MENES, PTOLYCUS, *and* PSOPHIS.

Men. Are you sure the priests appointed to-morrow for the sacrifice?

Psop. Certain, I had it from my father; he, direct from Arbaces.

Ptol. Then the maidens, or rather the "stars" of Egypt will culminate in the temple to-morrow, where one of them will be selected to adorn the paradise of heaven.

Men. I presume you mean that the girl who is to be sacrificed will be there chosen, but how?

Psop. What a barbarian!—why by lot, of course; then there will be a procession to the Nile, to whose sacred waters the body will be committed.

Men. That is as it should be; the shrunken river, foul and stagnant, suits well in my opinion with the rite.

Ptol. Silence, you unbeliever!

Psop. Those inlanders have no more religion than beasts.

Men. Why, Irad never commanded a human victim to be slain at Thebes, and when the river rises here it commonly rises there also.

Ptol. Thus the Gods tolerate Thebes for the virtue of Memphis.

Men. Would you call it virtue, Ptolycus, should they fancy Euclid's pretty daughter to-morrow?

Ptol. Certainly, she will be honoured in their choice.

Men. How calmly he bears the supposition.

Psop. Yes! he may, for he's lost her, if he ever had any favour there, which I doubt notwithstanding his brags; the young Grecian captain's lord there, if I can read the language of eyes.

Men. Yes, by the bye, he commands on land as well as on sea.

Ptol. He had better not cross me; I shall spoil that baby face of his, unless he locks it up in iron.

Men. He wears but a short sword, it is true, but I suspect what you call his baby face much.

Ptol. I'll let him know.

Psop. What! here he comes.

Enter ALCIBIADES.

(Aside.) Now tell him.

Ptol. I—I've nothing to tell him.

Alcib. What, are you here?—the banquet is prepared.
The wine is broached, and you are here, fie! fie!

Men. What keeps you here, then, captain?

Alcib. Oh because—

(Aside.) What shall I say?—Why, I have business here
Which brooks not interruption. Come, away—
Or you'll be late.

Psop. (Aside.) He stays to meet your girl.
I'll bet my life on't, man, he came with her.
That's pleasant, most decidedly delightful!

Ptol. (Aside.) What shall I do?

Psop. (Aside.) Remain and mar his sport.
You see his baby face is quite uncovered.
Come, Menes, for the revels, come, away!

Ptol. (Aside.) No, don't you leave me.

Psop. (Aside.) Man, I would not miss
A morsel of the banquet, or a drop
Of that rare exquisite old Theban wine
For all the girls in Egypt, or the world.
[*Exeunt Menes and Psophis.*

Alcib. (To Ptol.) Why wait you here? hence, man, with speed, and join
With your companions in the festal hall!

Ptol. I rather think I'll stop, I'm better here.

Alcib. Oh no, my friend, you're not; indeed you'll lose
The best of banquets; go—why tarry here?

Ptol. I have no wish, no reason for to go!

Alcib. Reason! I'll shew you one (*draws his sword.*) Just look at this.
This is a potent reason.

Ptol. Yes!—I'm gone!
[*Exit Ptolycus.*

Alcib. Excuse me, but we Grecians hunt alone.
The maiden loves me—is most beautiful,
The very soul of love! When forth I bore
Her angel form from Meroth's magic hall,
From that familiar—oh! she would not waste
One word on her dear self; but, where is he?
Imperfectly she murmured in her swoon,
Oh! save him, save him, do not fear my life.
'Twas I who struck the vase. Whilst fluttering
'Twixt life and death, unknowing what she did,
She told her secret of undying love.
Lo! where she comes, mid flowers the loveliest;
Diana's self might pale for jealousy
Of her diviner charms.

Enter EUDORA.

Dearest Eudora,
Time's lazy foot hath crawled so tardily—
But peace with him—were he mine enemy
I could not blame him now.

Eud. I fear I have done wrong. My father's
To leave about this hour of the night; [wont
Perhaps, as this is a delightful eve,
He will stay later. Still, I fear 'tis wrong.
Alcib. Ah, say not so; thy father could not feel
Such friendship as I own; a dearer word!
That is too cold, Eudora!—dare I speak?
I'll trust your mercy even with my life,
And change that chilly, that profaned word
For love, devoted love!
Eud. The maids of Greece
Should own your truant heart. Egyptian girls,
Unblest by graces, find no favour there.
Alcib. Nay, mock me not with such most cruel words;
I've told your eyes my secret long ere this,
Which they did not rebuke. Do let your lips
Confirm their fond decision.
Eud. Must I then
Confess my love? Unlike the maids that know
A colder clime, we yield up all our heart,
And own it, to our shame.
Alcib. Now by yon star
Those words accuse your lips most wrongfully,
Nor shall you slander so your innocence
Whilst thus I can prevent you—(*kisses her.*)
Eud. True it is
You shielded me from death; and gratitude
Is overcome by love—it is not crime
To love one who has offered life for me;
Ah, no!—I fear I can but half repay
The obligation of so deep a debt.
Alcib. Your voice is sweetest music to mine ear.
I pray you speak;—the stars await to list,
The silent moon seems to my ravished eye
To linger for your tale.
Eud. Nay, 'tis to yours;
For I could listen an eternity
To accents so enchanting.
Alcib. Such a scene
Was, sure, for love created. My Eudora,
You must persuade yon silver orb of night
To light our bark to Athens.
Eud. Must I go,
And leave my father and my native land?
But 'tis for you, and you are all to me.
Ah! without thee the groves of Paradise
To me were worse than exile.
Alcib. There we'll hie,
And Greece shall be the fairer for thy smile;
There shall the earth spontaneously pour
Her richest offerings around thy steps;
The date and the pomegranate's juicy store
Should ripen at thy smile; the fruitful vine
Shall weave her tangled tendrils round thy bower;
All happiness thy presence will inspire,
And dreams Elysian wait us here on earth.
Eud. You paint an Eden, but without thy love
'Twere nought to me; and grant me but thy smile,
The deepest dungeon were a holy spot,
For my fond fancy would transform its walls,
However dark, to heaven's own crystal bounds.
But, hush!—who comes?—'tis Calmar.

Enter CALMAR.

Cal. Fairest lady,
Your father waits you in the portico;
He stays but for your presence.
Eud. We will go.
[*Exeunt Alcibiades and Eudora.*
Cal. What's in those words, that on my throbbing heart [veins—
They fall like bolts of ice, thrill through my
Curdling the circling blood? *We*—*we* will go!
They are but words, but in those words is death.
Why did I love her? Why have I thus dreamt
To wake in such a dire reality?
Yet were my time to come, I would again
For the same prize await the same reverse.
I could for her have sacrificed my life;
But hope is buried now in mem'ry's grave.
Alas! no more the sun shall me awake
To cheerful life—to love! The world's a blank—
A universal gloom o'er nature hangs;
Eternity of woe. My weary breast
Longs for the grave, its only hope of rest.

SCENE V.

The Gardens of Isis, same as Scene III.

Enter ARBACES.

Arb. This is the spot. What keeps my trusty
My confidant—Arbaces' confidant? [friend,
The butcher of the temple. Well he knew
And scorned the vain attempt by which I strove
To blind his wolfish eye; even the vile
Deride and spurn me from their bloated ranks.
'Tis said, "vice levels all degrees," but I
Have sunk beneath the level of a villain.
This is the very cope-stone of disgrace,
To league with a base wretch, whose bloody trade
Alone shuts out the friendship of the world,
And be by him—yes! e'en by him—despised.
His presence now to me will be a pang,
And justice haunt me in his brutal form,
And vengeance lour in his gloomy scowl.
Perish the thought; he shall not live to shew
Arbaces' shame unto Arbaces' self;
I'll stifle it in 's blood. I hear his step.

Enter TIGRANES.

Well, have you sped the Greek?
Tig. No; I had no opportunity; that youngster watched me like a hawk through the whole evening.
Arb. 'Tis better, Tigranes, as it is.
Tig. My lord, I'll find a time both for him and his friend—the young devil, he had his hand on his sword twice, to stab me; never fear my succeeding—I know my trade.
Arb. What an outrageous monster!
Tig. You'll sleep just as well after it; you don't do it—it is not your deed.
Arb. No, Tigranes, you must forget to-night.

Tig. *(Aside.)* (What a chicken-hearted fool.) There'll be no difficulty; I heard him make so light of death to-night, that I thought of calling him aside, and asking him to do the thing himself.

Arb. You're quite facetious. What did he say?

Tig. They were conversing about the "Silent Guest," when he remarked, the body was only a hindrance to the soul; in fact, rather a burden than otherwise.

Arb. Well, Tigranes, I think we shall punish him best by permitting him to retain it: think of this no more, Tigranes.

(Turns to depart.)

Tig. My lord!

Arb. What would you?

Tig. I would rather have your countenance than money, my lord.

Arb. Say on—spare the preface.

Tig. Well, I was engaged in such business before.

Arb. When? where? by whom?

Tig. Why, by young Ptolycus.

Arb. So, so. *(Aside.)* (How secret he is.) Go on.

Tig. I fear I was discovered. I am to be tried for it: if you would only say I was on duty in the temple, none dare dispute your word, my lord.

Arb. Oh! is that all? certainly, good Tigranes; but *(stabs him)* perhaps that will answer better, slave, than my character.

Tig. Oh, killed! *(Tigranes dies.)*

Arb. So ends our friendship!—you were far too free
To keep my counsel long—you modest slave!
It is no crime to rid a groaning world
Of such a brutish and abandoned wretch.
All silent now, though still his glazing eye
Glares with a gloomy scowl of deadly hate;
But thou art secret—secret as the grave—
And buried with thee be my fear and shame;
No wretch like thee shall blast Arbaces' name.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Room in EUCLID'S *House.*

(ALCIBIADES *solus; a stylus and scrolls on a table before him.)*

Enter CRITO.

Alcib. These for the captain of the Argo. See
That all his ships are ready to depart
By early morn to-morrow. Serve the wind,
They'll make the cape by night, and anchor off
Waiting for me—I shall not start till eve.
Give Ctesiphon this scroll. Did he report
His vessels fit for duty, sound, and free
From damage by the storm?

Crito. Such were his words,
But they were then repairing.

Alcib. Ah! he loves
To brag upon their strength; I'll stake my life
That we're detained by him. But he's a true
And skilful pilot off our Grecian coast;
I know none better.

Crito. He had not commenced
With his repairs till yesterday.

Alcib. Why so?

Crito. You know his way—he saw you here, and swore
'Twould be a month before we hoisted sail.

Alcib. What did he say?—a month!—he must be mad.
And pray what reasons made him so conclude?

Crito. Let him explain, himself; I only know
When he returned, 'tis said he poured a full
And free libation to "our captain's wife,"
"Goddess of Egypt;" and his officers
Soon noised it through the fleet.

Alcib. If it were true,
Who ever knew me laggard when the state
Demanded my assistance? So it is,
Our faults in peace mock our designs in war;
But love shall never lap my soul in silks,
Nor cause me to abate one inch in speed
When on the hunt for Athens' foes and mine.

Crito. But is he right? will thus our fleet be honored?
'Twill be a double triumph; we shall bear
The conqueror and conquered both in one,
Another sphynx-like riddle.

Alcib. Peace, I say;
They're both to be achieved. You count too fast.

Crito. Nay, you are fast if in three days you've gain'd
So great a victory o'er Egypt's beauty.
But why such cause of haste?

Alcib. What Greek would ask
Such question? When on business of the state,
At its expense, can we be too alert?
But there's another reason.

Crito. What is that,
If I might thus presume upon your friendship?

Alcib. I do not like to own it; but 'tis this—
Daggers are far too plenty here for me.

Crito. You do not fear?

Alcib. *I fear!*—No truly, Crito;
I do not fear, but *loathe* a spotted viper;
Yet if I know the reptile's in a brake,
I think 'tis wise to shun it.

Crito. I would seek
The magi, and complain; they rule all here.

Alcib. *I* seek protectors, never! mine own
Was ever my protector. Hark ye, Crito; [arm
You'd send the lamb unto the wolves to ask
If they would please to scare the fox away;
Why, they are the abettors of the villain—
At least one is; and all priests hunt in packs.

Crito. I had not thought there were such villains here;
But I must hence; for, if we leave so soon,
My presence will be wanted with the fleet.

Alcib. I understand you, Crito; I'll be there
Upon your heels, go swiftly as you may.
[*Exit Crito.*
(Solus.) So, so!—the jest and byword of the fleet;
I'm sorry I engaged in't. But 'tis done;
Nor would I breathe a thought to injure her,
Or grieve her gentle heart.

Enter EUDORA.

What, weeping, dearest?—why those tears, Eudora?

Eud. Have you not heard of my dear father's illness?
We kept him waiting yesternight—I fear
That is the cause.

Alcib. Pooh! he will soon recover.

Eud. Nay, I know not; the leech is with him yet;
But I have tended on him through the night;
You must excuse me now.

Alcib. One word, Eudora;
Why in such haste? [then.

Eud. (Listening.) I thought I heard him,

Alcib. There are attendants with him, are there not? [he says

Eud. Yes; but they are not daughters. Why,
The bitter potion loses half its gall
When 'tis to him by me administered.

Alcib. 'Tis but a cold. I wished to speak with him
To ask him now to sanction your departure.

Eud. Nay, not now.
You must not ask him now. Why, it would be
Cruel desertion; but you mean it not.
Alcib. Dearest Eudora, I must leave to-morrow.
Eud. I think you do but test my love for you;
You deem me light because I heard your suit,
And granted it so soon; and thus you'd prove me.
Say 'twas your aim, unworthy, could you doubt me?
Alcib. I've spoken but the truth.
Eud. What pressing reason
Could force us thus, upon so short a summons,
To quit our once loved port?
Alcib. I have one, love;
Let that suffice you, though I name it not.
Eud. Do you speak so to me?
Alcib. It would be vain
In me to name it. *(Aside.)* ('Twould not be believed,
For these Egyptians to their priests are slaves.)
I cannot name it; you must trust my faith.
Eud. Say you will not; say that I am unworthy [heart.
To share your counsels, and to know your
'Tis cruel thus to urge me now to leave.
Alcib. Were I arraigned at Pluto's dread tribunal,
I could not truer speak. My purpose is
To go to-morrow; must I go alone?
Eud. Your words are harsh.
Alcib. Why do you doubt them then?
Eud. I do not doubt them, neither doubt you mine.
If you thus cruelly can break your faith,
You must alone depart; for should I leave
My parent in such strait, my guilty conscience
Would be a curse no grief could wash away.
I could not even love you; for in you,
(Should my dear father die,) I'd view the cause,
The guilty cause of his distressful end.
[*Exit Eudora.*
Alcib. She is no mate for me. Yet who could deem
That one so mild could wake such energy?
A fury, not a woman. Go *alone*—indeed!
Alone—thus taunted by a puny girl.
I stooped to do her honour; 'twas well done.
I swore to follow glory; now no thought
On such poor weaklings shall divert my steps.
[*Exit Alcibiades.*

Re-enter EUDORA.

Eud. Alas! is he then gone? What have I done?
Are all my dreams of happiness dispersed?
He could not wish me now to quit my home.
He's gone, alas! for ever. Nay, not so;
He will return. He cannot so forget
What death will ne'er from me obliterate.
He will return, and pay with penitence
The value of each tear I drop for him.
(An Eolian harp sounds in the casement.)
Hark! 'tis my harp. Again! no—silent now.
Has zephyr left thee too?—Both, both forlorn!
Methinks I could sing sorrow.

(To a silent Eolian harp.)
Why art thou silent, gentle harp?
Why sleeps thy magic tone?
Hath wanton zephyr left thy chords,
And from thy music flown?
But grieve not thou! he'll soon return,
And with his downy wing,
Fan perfume through the harp he loves,
And kiss each tuneful string.

But ah! what charm can cheer the maid
Whom love's soft breath awakes,
Man's frail inconstancy to prove,
To learn that he forsakes?
Again, no more the broken chords
May yield a fond reply,
The tones, once sweet, are mournful now,
In trembling sighs they die.

Enter LEIRA.

Leira. What a most mournful song!
Eud. I feel so, Leira,
I scarce know why. But have you never felt
A dread of some impending sad disaster
Weigh on your spirits?
Leira. I? oh no!
You're not in love; what makes you look so [dull?
Eud. Nay, do not mock me so.
Leira. What do you mean?
You were joy's picture once; now you appear
A monument of grief.
Eud. It was that fright;
'Tis nothing more, my Leira.
Leira. Fright! What fright?
Do let me hear; for until now I knew not
What change had wrought so great a marvel in [you.
Eud. It was at Meroth's.
Leira. What, the magian's?
Eud. Yes.
My father went there with the stranger Greeks.
Leira. With those uncouth barbarians?
Eud. Have you seen them?
Leira. I saw them standing in the temple porch— [same?
A strange old man and youth; are they the
Eud. They are. Well, when I reached the palace hall
I went into that room—that fatal room—
Leira. I know it well; go on, I'd hear the rest.
Eud. Well then, the foreigner was there.
Leira. Alone?
I would not be near that old wretch for worlds.
I wonder not that you were terrified.
Eud. 'Twas not—the—
Leira. Not the Greek; who then?
Eud. Yes, 'twas the Greek, but—
Leira. But what?—you hesitate;
Do tell your tale, Eudora.
Eud. Not the eldest:
I think they called him Alcibiades. [a girl.
Leira. You mean that one who looks so like
Eud. Looks like a girl! He did not act like one;
For when the fierce familiar sprang at me,
He faced it like a lion.

Leira. Ah! indeed!
Were you not terrified? I'll never judge
Again by looks: why, even an Egyptian
Would fear a magian's pow'r.
Eud. 'Twas not his,
'Twas my presumption: I *would* touch the vase
Against his counsel. Isis, pardon me!
Leira. You were not wont to be so bold, Eudora;
But I must leave you. Come, arouse yourself,
And look like what you were. *You* need not fear;
I'm sure you did not menace the familiar,
Or threaten mighty Meroth.
[*Exit Leira.*
Eud. Would I had,
Could I avert his wrath from him I love.
Ah! that's the peremptory cause which prompts
His swift departure, which his pride refused
To own to me—his cruel mate—who sought
So to detain him, to present him bound
To Meroth's anger. Even now, perchance,
He suffers for my crime. If it be so,
I ne'er may hope for happiness again.
I led him into danger; but for me
And my rash hand, he ne'er had been exposed.

SCENE II.

A Hall in MEROTH'S *Palace.*

(MEROTH *solus.*)

Enter Attendant. *(Shouts without.)*
Mer. What means that shouting?
Att. It is at the river:
The foreigners have been distributing
Some food unto the poor.
Mer. The Greeks, you mean.
Att. The same, my lord; I was this morning there.
It is the elder who has gained for them
This favor, and our people's clamour now
Is raised to thank him.
Mer. (Aside.) Fever parch their throats!
They sauce their *pray'rs* to *me* with insolence,
Because my providence rebukes their waste.
(Aloud.) Close up our granaries and bar the doors,
Nor sell nor give. It is not right in us,
Heav'n's minister, to seek to thwart its will.
Besides, there are no signs the Nile will rise,
And 'tis but prudent that the stores we have
Should be attended to with heedful care.
(Meroth looks out.)
Why even now they gather round the gates.
Hah! by my life 'tis so. Come hither, slave!
Who ordered that?
Att. 'Tis only the remains
Of last night's feast, my lord.

Enter CALMAR.

Mer. Send him to me
Who thus has dared to cast away my goods
Upon a lawless and a mutinous mob,
Whose pride the Gods can't humble; whose lewd throats
Reek with rebellion, and whose unarmed hands
Are ever impotently raised against
Their wise and lawful rulers.
Cal. (to the Attendant) Fear not, friend.
(To Meroth) I gave the order; if there's fault—'tis mine.
Mer. (to the Attendant) Hence to the portal! See the gates are closed.
[*Exit Attendant.*
How came you to forget my late command?
'Tis not a week since I refused to grant
This daily dole.
Cal. Alas! I could not bear
Their haggard looks and wild entreating eyes.
Besides, your words were, that we should not give:
Have they not paid for this?
Mer. How paid?
Cal. With thanks,
With heartfelt thanks, and blessings on your head!
Mer. A precious recompense! Deluded boy,
When you do know the changeful multitude,
You'll think yourself best paid by its reproach.
Cal. In its prosperity perhaps I might;
But, oh! not now. There's not a prize on earth
I'd sooner strive for than the poor man's pray'r:
Benevolence receives her pay on earth.
Mer. Aye, beggars' thanks—the service of the lip;
Love in the mouth and envy in the heart.
But you are young; you'll not believe me now,
Nor learn from one who speaks unwelcome truths;
From one who's read in the black leaves of life
The fearful secrets of the human heart.
But age shall teach what now you will not learn,
And force you to confess my judgment just,
And ratify its justice.
Cal. Never, never!
What molten gold is priceless as the tear
Of joy on sorrow's cheek? What gem so rich
As the bright smile which, with a peerless ray,
Suns the sad brow of rugged misery?
They beggar earth's best treasures; nay, they pass
As current coin in heav'n.
Mer. Boy! boy!
I spoke of its rewards on earth alone.
But go; I cannot fetter thee. Command
E'en as thou wilt. Go, feed your pensioners.
[*Exit Calmar.*
(Solus.) How, like a cherub on the wing to bear
Some cheering message to a fallen world,
He speeds to his glad task; and I am paid
In viewing his delight. No slave is he,
To crouch to every base suggestion here.
His artless innocence has more than strength
To swerve and bend me to his nobler will.

Enter ARBACES.

How beats the nation's pulse in Egypt's council?
Can we perform the bidding of the Gods,
And sacrifice this stranger to appease them?
Arb. I sounded them; but much resistance fear

From Irad and his friends. Nay, many deem
He holds the rite itself as impious.
Mer. It shall be done, Arbaces; 'tis my will.
Arb. Why, know you not, he openly asserts
You are in league with Typhon's ruthless powers,
And must obey their merciless commands
At once, or cease to live?
Mer. Is he so bold?
Arb. Before the Grecian sage (I heard it said)
He branded as impiety the rite
Of human sacrifice; and that he mourned
And wept for it, as a foul stain on Egypt.
Mer. And what said Socrates? We must have proofs.
What said the Greek, Arbaces?
Arb. He remarked
They had abjured the custom long ago.
Mer. Was that the whole?
Arb. Yes, all.
Mer. Come, are you sure?
I would learn all, Arbaces.
Arb. Irad's friends
Were there as well as I; there was no more.
Mer. *(abruptly)* That you conceived important. I must have
A far more full report; nay more, I will.
Arb. If I hear further it shall be reported.
But Irad must be well sustained, or else
He had not dared so far. I think 'twere best
Not to attempt to sacrifice this man.
Mer. It must be done, Arbaces. Plead no more,
For argument has ceased. Abet my plans;
Go forth again; unlock my treasures all,
And pour them forth as water in your quest;
Lash thou the timid and caress the bold.
Whilst we have honors, wealth, and offices,
And *men* are *men*, they're ours. Strive again;
All, all are somewhere weak. A piercing eye
To note the imperfections of mankind,
The wit to use them, and the will to dare,
Are all a ruler needs.
Arb. We're closely press'd;
Many, with Irad, deem it impious.
Mer. His very name I loathe. Prythee no more;
'Tis poison on your lips. I hate him worse
Than all the plagues of Moussa. For yourself,
This cause successful, and my throne is yours.
Arb. I'll see them once again, and use *all* means
To sway them to your wish.
Mer. Do so, and here
Return with speed, but not without success.
[*Exit Arbaces.*
They strain upon the bit; that iron Irad
Has taught them to rebel. He'll rue his work;
My enemies in Egypt never prosper.
How stand I now? Many are chained to me
With links of steel; Arbaces, thou art one,
(Having no choice but 'twixt myself and ruin.)
These are my trustiest. Others there are
Serve me through fear; self-int'rest many binds;
Ambition, avarice!—friendship only one!
Well, I care not; so man is but my tool,
Let gold, love, fear, or hope his motives rule.

SCENE III.

A Room in EUCLID'S *House.*

EUDORA *solus.*

Eud. That hope is vain.—He will return no more.
If I could see him once—but once again,
That we might part in peace; that I might steal,
And, miser-like, hoard in my memory
His last, last glance of love; that I might hear
Again those vows so full of harmony—
"Of heav'nly melody,"—that music's self
Ceased with their silver tones, and charms no more
This weary-sated ear; that I might feel
The thrilling pressure of that hand, whose touch
Entranced my frame and filled my soul with love.
Can he be gone? Are these delights a dream?
Oh! that I had not seen his noble form,
Nor sunk beneath the magic of his eye.
What do I say?—Ingrate! I would not part
With one fond look—one well-remembered vow—
Ah, no! they are my treasures, my delights,
My wealth—my all.
Hush! it is only Calmar.

Enter CALMAR.

Cal. Eudora, pardon me for this intrusion.
I called to speak with Alcibiades,
The captain of the galleys—is he here?
Eud. No; he has left our house.
Cal. Indeed! I knew not.
Meroth commanded me to speak with him.
I saw this morn some of his ships had left
Their moorings, and stood out; the rumour is
They leave our port to-night. Can you inform me?
Eud. I heard their captain say 'twas his intent.
"I trust,"—that is, my father hopes he'll stay
To see the sacrifice "this day appointed."
Cal. Are you among the chosen?
Eud. I am one;
But there are many others.
Cal. True, there are.
How pale you look! I heard that you were
When at the palace. [frightened
Eud. 'Tis an old tale now.
You were not there, though, had you been,
You fear that fell familiar. [perhaps
Cal. I? oh, no!
But did you really see the demon there,
Alone?—'twas well you had that talisman.
Eud. I had it not.
Cal. Then how were you defended?
Eud. By a much safer guard—his arm and
Cal. Whose? [sword.
Eud. Why, the Grecian's.
Cal. It were nothing—*there!*
Eud. Nothing?—'twas my defence, and no-
Than such a toy as this. [bler far
(Takes the talisman off her neck.)
Cal. Oh, hush! Eudora!
Such words are impious; 'twas the dying gift
Of a most learned rabbi; it was wrought
From th' holy mountain of the law; its form
Is mystical—and potent. Well I know
And prize its worth.

Eud. 'Tis worthless now to me.
The "valour of a soldier" was my guard.
Here—you can take your matchless prize again;
I will not wear it more.
(Gives Calmar the talisman.)
'Twere far too dear
To buy that trifle with a friend's dishonour.
You, Calmar, may require its vaunted aid,
But he who shielded me in that fell hall
Despises such a bauble. Well he knows
The only amulet a hero needs
Is a true sword in his courageous hand.
Cal. You are unkind—nay, more, unjust, Eudora;
But I forgive you; thankful you are saved;
I care not for the means; though well I know
That mortal arm would be all pow'rless there.
(Calmar retires.)
Eud. (Solus.) What said he? "that the galleys were unmoored;"
Then, it is true—there is no hope for me.
Break, break, thou throbbing heart; what is there left
On earth for thee? thy peace hath passed away.
Why dost thou cumber this all-cheerless world?
Oh, heav'n! *in mercy take my soul to thee!*
(Calmar advances.)
Cal. (Aside.) Though wronged—rejected—scorned—still must I love.
I will defend thee, even with my life.
(Aloud.) Eudora, not alone I came to serve
Lord Meroth's will—I've something else to speak.
(Eudora looks upon him scornfully.)
Fear not; all hope has left me—'tis not that.
Eud. What would you, Calmar?
Cal. Save you with my life!
When for the sacrifice you draw this day,
Shun the third vase—it holds the fatal lot;
There will be five; 'tis in the centre vase
I saw it placed. Upon your secrecy
My life is hung, but that is valueless;
Why need I mention that? And now farewell!
Dearest, farewell for ever! Never more—
No, never more will I oppose your peace.
Eud. (Aside.) (Then heav'n has heard my prayer.) Stay, Calmar, stay;
Forgive me, Calmar; let us part like friends;
How could I wrong you so? forgive me, Calmar.
Cal. It was my fault, Eudora; do not weep;
One tear of thine, methinks, would wash away
A world of crime, and on its author's head
Bring down the wrath of heav'n. Do not weep.
Eud. No, I am calm; and these unworthy tears
No more shall stain my cheek. *Chosen* and *called*,
Why should I weep? Calmar, you prize these flowers;
I'll leave them to you as an offering [love!
To peace—(I've done with maiden fears)—to
This one was planted—see how rich its bloom—
E'en on my natal day; it will survive
Its frailer mistress if you tend it well,
And that you will do, when you view in it
The fond remembrance of an absent friend—
A *sister's*, Calmar, a *loved sister's* gift.

Cal. Why speak you thus? you need not fear, Eudora.
Let not the horrid sacrifice—
Eud. Hush! hush!
It is my country's creed. You—an Egyptian,
A priest—to utter such a calumny
On our most sacred rite!
Cal. Sacred, Eudora?
Eud. Aye, sacred. By your love I would command
Your silence on this theme. And leave me
For I must be prepared. [now,
[*Exit Calmar.*
Enter LEIRA.
My dearest Leira,
Are you of the devoted?
Leira. Ask my tears;
The livelong night I've mourned.
Eud. Fear not, my love,
For though there be a choice from many maids,
Yet only one is chosen.
Leira. Oh, 'tis worse
Than certainty itself. Oh, not on me!
Heav'n asks one only: should it fall on me,
'Twill crush two youthful hearts. Oh, pity me!
The Gods reject with scorn th' unwilling beast
Dragged to the altar by a slavish chain.
I cannot leave this bright and glorious world.
I ask no Eden's bow'rs; my heav'n is here,
And here alone.
Eud. Ah, you have hope and love.
I read your woman's heart. No, no, my Leira,
Heav'n's chosen must be weaned from earthly
All, all its own. The holy sacrifice [cares;
Must from such gross impurities be purged;
Aye, and the unseen knife be driven home
Deep, deep into her heart. 'Tis not the steel
Of the appointed priest which cuts the tie
That binds her soul to dust.
Leira. Oh, hush, Eudora!
How know you but that such may be *your* doom?
Eud. My *doom?*—my refuge from the woes of life.
My world has passed away. My dearest Leira,
When heav'n demands a victim it *prepares* one.
Come, let us to the temple—*I* am called!

SCENE IV.

Interior of the Temple of Isis.

Five Egyptian vases on the altar before the statue of the Goddess.

(Alcibiades, Socrates, and Calmar on the one side; Menes, Psophis, and Ptolycus on the other. Choristers, people, and an executioner masked in an Egyptian helmet mask.)

Psop. 'Tis now ten years since the last sacrifice.
Gent. The magi are divided, are they not,
Upon this custom?

Ptol. Yes, but Meroth rules;
He likes the good old plan, and what is more,
There's none dare question aught his pleasure wills. [protests
Men. You're wrong; for the lord Irad now
Against such sacrifices, and is joined
By many in the council; nay, 'tis said
That the majority his views uphold.
Psop. Indeed, but 'twill be vain; they cannot bend [done.
Lord Meroth's judgment; what he wills is
Ptol. He's the best man that Egypt ever saw.
Menes. Not so, posterity will that deny.
Ptol. Who dares dispute his claim?
Menes. Why, Euclid dares,
Who taught the farmers how to mete their grounds,
That each might know his own, when th' holy stream [marks
Shrank backwards to its bed; for oft the land-
Were washed away, or buried in the slime,
Which caused great litigation.
Psop. Then the priests
Owe him no thanks for his officiousness. [one
Menes. 'Tis a good act, which only injures
To benefit a million.
Psop. Cease your prate;
Here's the old man, and Ptolycus's friend:
Let's list to their discourse.
Alcib. We had of yore
A custom similar.
Socrates. That is most true,
But it was barbarous, and so appears
To all now viewed by education's light.
Ptol. Hear the atrocious villain!
Menes. Peace, I say;
Your tongue is rather longer than your sword.
Psop. And much more dangerous, but here they come.

Enter from the right MEROTH, ARBACES, *and priests. Enter from the left* EUDORA, *and the band of maidens.*

Alcib. (To Calmar.) Wert thou the God, which maiden would'st thou choose?
Cal. Who would create such beauteous forms to blight them,
E'en in the bloom of youth?
Alcib. Eudora's first;
Her chance methinks is best; how beautiful!
Look at her shining hair; in rippling waves
E'en to her feet, her fairy feet, it floats;
Her rounded arm, laced with an azure vein,
Pure as a cloudless sky; her sparkling eye
So warm, and so inviting. Mighty Jove!
Wert thou the God, thy choice would centre there;
Why death himself would warm upon those lips.
Cal. Alas! I fear those eyes; see how the mind
Looks through and animates the beauteous clay
It tenants to ennoble. Look! behold!
How like a prophetess inspired she stands,
Free from the taints of earth; her thoughts above,
Piercing her home, the sky, and tracking far
Her sinless soul through the blue ether's waste.
Ah! whither have I strayed? pray you, excuse me,
For I am half a poet; and my thoughts
Oft thus unheeding wander. Hark! the choir!

Music. *Chor.*

Here are Egypt's fairest flowers,
Cull thine own for Aden's bowers.
Bud of earth! to bloom in heav'n,
Holy angels, shelter thee,
All thy sins shall be forgiven,
Thou art pardoned, thou art free.
Fear not thou the sleep of sorrow,
Fear not thou the tempest's blight;
Thou shalt waken on the morrow,
In the gardens of delight.
Here are Egypt's fairest flowers,
Cull thine own for Aden's bowers.

Mer. Now glory unto her on whom the choice
Of holy Isis falls. Advance, and draw.
The answer is by fire. Blessings on her
Who by her death shall from our groaning land
Avert the wrath of heav'n.
(Eudora and the rest advance. She draws the lot from the third vase, which ignites.)
The first and fairest!—Omen most propitious!
Eud. I claim the lot; the sacrifice be mine.
Egypt, thy fields shall smile with plenty crowned,
And the glad harvest whiten all thy plains.
For me, I've nought on earth; a willing victim,
Isis, thine altar claims; behold her here!
Cal. Oh cursed rite!—Oh odious damnèd crime!
Where is thy vengeance, heav'n?
Mer. Silence, slave!
The prophecy in thee is part fulfilled;
The beauty of our land—a worthy offering.
The fairest to the Gods!—Great Isis, hear us!
(Eudora faints; Alcibiades supports her. The executioner advances.)
Alcib. Back, wretch! you're needed not; the maid is dying! [touch;
Eud. Pollute me not with thine unhallowed
Stranger, I'm firm; I will not need thine arm.
Go, earn thy glory; mount the lofty top
Of fame's high pinnacle;—forget your vows!
Yet no—if that one thought, one care intrudes,
Forgive me, Isis!—The despised Egyptian
Would still, although it be in vain, request
A grave in thy fond memory, and oh!
I would not be forgotten there, though dead!—
Farewell! this pang!—No, Isis, I'm thine own.
My last—last—earthly hope is rent away;
It parts—with parting life!—Forget me not.
(Eudora dies.)
Cal. She's gone, too beautiful for earth; a
Unblighted, Aden-born, and lent to us [flow'r
To elevate our thoughts and hopes to heav'n.
The statue of Isis is illumined; Meroth points to it, exclaiming,—

Mer. THE OFFERING IS ACCEPTED! WE ARE ANSWERED!—

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall in Meroth's Palace.

Time, midnight. CALMAR *solus.*

Enter MEROTH.

Mer. Is all prepared?
Cal. It is, as you commanded,
In perfect order. [forth
Mer. And most propitiously the stars shine
(Those bright recorders of the fates of men)
In all their majesty.
Cal. How beautiful!
Did they sway mortal destinies, methinks
There would be nought of evil in the world.
Mer. You are too young to read their mysteries; [orb?
They are indeed most bright. Seest thou yon
That is my natal star. 'Tis vertical.
I never saw it shine so brilliantly,
Save on that night. Why think upon it now?
'Tis an unhappy omen.
Cal. What, my lord?
Mer. Calmar, 'twould blanch thy cheek to hear the tale. [them—never.
Cal. Not so. I love your words. I feared
Mer. I deem you would, were I to breathe the thoughts
Which flashed upon me then.
Cal. Oh, no, my lord.
Do let me hear. Ere now I've heard you say
I was your treasurer, and kept the key
Of all your golden hours. Let this be one;
For should this early record of your life
Be fraught with woe, I know what sorrow is,
And well can pay its price in pity's tears.
Mer. You know not sorrow such as mine; 'twould break
Thy gentle spirit to conceive its depth. [a man
Cal. Nay, that I'll ne'er believe; for what
May bear, I must, and have borne.
(Calmar weeps.)
Mer. What! a trail
Of the old serpent over one so young?
What branch has withered from life's blooming tree? [you'll smile.
What wakes thy tears? But ere the morn
Cal. Never again!
Mer. 'Tis but a shadow o'er the sun of youth;
'Twill quickly pass. Ah! would thy lot were mine!
Cal. You cannot know more misery than I.
Mer. Away! Thou couldst not dream *my*
Cal. I never knew till now—— [agonies!
Mer. Would'st hear my tale,
'Twill shrink thy misery's mountain to a speck—
A mote, unnoticed in the brightest beam
Of an unclouded sun. Remorse and guilt,
They goad me now; by them am I impelled
Thus to unlade this heavy burden here.
Calmar, on such a night—so bright, so calm—
I sacrificed to Moloch——
Cal. What?
Mer. My son!
My only son! That fearful picture yet?
What! will it never fade? I see the flames!
The glowing brands! The horrid priests are there!
The mothers—how they toss their naked arms
In wild fanatic fury! Nay, I hear—
I hear their very shrieks!
Cal. Oh, horrible!
Mer. The struggle's o'er. Was it a hideous dream?
Oh, memory! Now hate me, Calmar.
Cal. No;
To me, an orphan, you've a father been.
My pray'rful tears shall wash away your guilt.
Mer. Beloved boy!
Cal. But was he then consumed,
E'en in the morn of life?
Mer. No, no! not slain,
But worse!—devoted to the cruel sway
Of that most murderous and insatiate god,
To whose vile priests the infant was consigned.
Nor have I seen him since; vain was the search
I made in after years. His mother died;
Died of her loss! I was her murderer!
Hadst thou seen her—hadst marked her tearful eye—
Her patient sufferings—all so meekly borne,
They gave e'en sorrow charms. With her I lost
All ties to earth. Now, is your friendship firm
For one so vile as I? You sought to know,
And you have heard my guilt and vain remorse.
Cal. What could induce you to commit such act?
Mer. Ambition, boy! I sought to gain that
Due only to the virtuous;—by such [prize
Unholy means:—oh, vanity of hope!—
To live eternal as the first of men!
And to that end my only son I gave
For empty knowledge — knowledge dearly bought.
Cal. All knowledge bought by guilt is dearly bought.
Mer. Thou'rt right; and though those words sound harsh from you,
I own their justice, Calmar
Cal. Oh, my lord,
I spoke in innocence.
Mer. That shield I've lost;

If thou hast that, thou'rt armed. Oh, Calmar!
Calmar!
'Tis virtue's ornament—her guardian gem—
Bright as the jewel on great Cheop's brow,
And priceless as his sword.
Cal. But did you ne'er
Hear tidings of your child?
Mer. Never again.
He was a pledge between me and the god.
That was our compact; 'twas on Zion's hill
The altar stood. Perchance e'en now he kneels
To Israel's God, and on that rock relies.
Cal. My mother, Miriam, was of Hebrew race;
She taught my infant lips to worship God;
But she is gone, and I am left alone. [shield?
Mer. Alone? Have I not ever been your
No, Calmar, you are mine—my only friend.
Cal. I would I were; this night I'd here remain
To share your labours and assuage your woe;
Then I *could* claim that title.
Mer. Not to night.
There will be those around which would con-
Thee unprepared. [sume
Cal. No, I'm protected here
By one who never yet deserted me.
Mer. Yes, but my friendship could not
'Gainst their immortal arms. [succour thee
Cal. I meant not thine.
Mer. I guess thy meaning. But thou may'st not stay;
For know, that he who mingles with the lost
Must leave that guardian's guidance evermore,
And meet them equal without fear or hope.
Cal. Hast thou no hope?
Mer. I have, to be fulfilled
In time, none further. Leave me, Calmar, now. [armed.
Cal. Why may not I remain? I too am
See where my great protector dwells above
With ever wakeful eyes; He will protect
Who led his chosen through the mighty deep,
And hurled an ocean on their enemies;
He will uphold me here. Strong in *His* strength,
I ask to meet *His* enemies and *thine.*
Demons are enemies alone of man;
Let me remain;—I pray thee, force me not,
I will not leave thy presence.
Mer. Faithful boy,
Who willingly would shield me with his life.
This is no place for thee—thou must depart,
For those are near whom I *alone* must meet.
(Meroth leads Calmar out.)
No breath of air. And smooth as Isis' cheek
The starlit river mocks the spangled sky,
Glowing with borrowed beauty. Calm as death
The waters sleep. No tinkling ripple wakes
With its light fall the ear, or mars the face
Of nature's mirror. Solemn is the scene.
'Tis Immortality embracing Time.
O for a cherub's wings to soar aloft
To gain that glittering crown; or pow'r to plunge
Into the azure depths of Nilus' wave,
To seize such priceless and eternal spoil;
Lo! where the sparkling serpent's silver folds
Revolving glitter in the lucid stream,
Or where, reflected clear, th' ecliptic's arch,
Studded with stars innumerable, girds
The vault of heaven, and, in the zenith hung,
The shining Scorpion laves its brilliant scales.
Mine hour draws on. The heav'nly charioteers
Approaching blend in one their rival orbs;
And their conjunction heralds forth my fate.

(Meroth retires from the casement into the circle.)
Ye Genii of the Earth! who reign beneath,
Deep in the pond'rous centre. Unto whom
The caves of earth are haunts; whose subtle paths
Through this revolving mass are all unknown
To us—benighted beings. Ye, who watch
With ever-wakeful eyes the priceless gifts
Of earth, or spangle caves with diamonds
And purest stalactites, in fancy forms
Innumerable. Ye, who know the veins,
And trace the rapid silver to its font.
Ye, who in earth's dark womb work nature's end,
And dwell, in sovereign state, on golden thrones
Shrined in your adamantine halls of light,
By peerless jewels sunned. Hear ye my words,
And by this offering be your wrath appeased.

The metals first, in order due,
In glitt'ring glory shine,
The sacred salt, the sulphur blue,
Fresh from the sparkling mine;
The basalt rock, the limestone white,
The relics of the past,
Whose forms in petrifactions bright,
The works of art outlast.
Nor be the dark ground newt forgot,
A subject to your sway,
The mole, who dwells where mortals rot,
And lives where men decay.
Let these appease your anger dire;
Be these the victims to your ire.

Powers of Air! whose forms ethereal fill
The azure vaults of heaven. More potent far
And subtler than the rulers of the earth.
Whether ye guide the planets as they roll,
Or hurl the shining meteor through the sky,
Affrighting matter with your aery play;
Or whether, far beyond our bounded ken,
Ye track the distant comet's burning path,
Where the purged ether knows no stain of earth,
Beyond the bounds of thought. To you I call,
And by this charm your indignation shun.
(Meroth burns a grain of myrrh.)

This vapour was bound in a magic chain,
It mounts to its home thus freed by flame;
By the genii of earth 'twas pent in a grain,
But the charm's dissolved, it is free again.
The prison is broken,
The captive is free,
I charm by this token
Your anger from me.
In spiral wreaths, it rises fair,
Propitious be, ye powers of air.

Ye Spirits of the Sea! to whom the depths
Of ocean, with her myriads of strange forms,
Her shells of every hue and every shape,
Her monsters, and her mysteries are known.
Ye Spirits of the vasty deep! who dwell
In coral halls and amber palaces,
All rich inlaid with the bright stone which stains
The sparkling crest of the wild wave with blue;
Where, on your thrones, with the sea-diamond decked, [gemmed,
With changeful opals, and with pearls be-
Ye sit—and rule the dwellers in the deep.
Obey this amulet of pow'r divine.

See the gem which erst has shone
O'er the brow of Solomon;
This the place,—and this the hour,—
Mark—and tremble at its pow'r.

Spirits of Fire! sons of light and heat,
Ye have defied me, ye have mocked mine art;
But ye this night I summon!—by my star,
Triumphing and triumphant—by this sign—
The sign of mighty Hermes!—by this charm
The witch of Endor wrought in Ramah, when
She woke the prophet from his peaceful sleep.

Ye answer not.
Is it for this I've sacked the stores of eld?
For this I've traversed wildernesses, rich
In nature's ample stores; her gardens wild,
Ere then unsoiled, unstained by human foot?
For this I've paced our arid sands—beneath
That glowing sky where ghastly madness glints
From Afric's burnished sunbeams? Is't for this
In foreign lands I've roamed afar to gain
The knowledge of their wise, nor feared to meet
The hot simoom's all-blasting breath, on which
Death rides alone—triumphant? By a spell
More potent far I'll shake your glowing thrones.
Twice hast thou answered—be the bond fulfilled.
Moloch! arise! appear!—He calls thee, who
On Zion's holy hill, by thee usurped,
Passed through thine altar's flames his first-born son;
Thy presence I compel. Flesh of my flesh—
Blood of my blood—the living record lasts;
And by that sacrifice I summon thee
Now to appear, and answer!
(The fallen angel Moloch appears.)

Mol. Swift as thought I thee obey,
Speak, I serve thee, child of clay!
Mer. When will the famine cease, the pesti-
Leave our beloved land? [lence
Mol. When fulfilled is the command
The pestilence will leave thy land,
Famine shall follow in her train,
And plenty smile on every plain.
Mer. To whom refers the oracle? To me
Thou didst all earthly knowledge grant, to me
All "mortal wisdom." But thou gav'st it not;
I have it not; our compact is annulled.
Mol. Thou didst ask "all earthly lore,"
It was granted; seek not more.
What you sought, to you was given;
"Wisdom" is the gift of heav'n.
Mer. Ah! subtle reasoning; too well I've proved
That "*knowledge*" is not "*wisdom.*" Mock-
Are all thy specious gifts. [eries
Mol. Why then demand?
We offer not—'twas by your will desired,
And what you sought you gained, "all earthly lore."
Mer. And misery!
Mol. Knowledge is misery;
He who knows most with men has most to
We know,—but grieve not. [mourn.
Mer. 'Tis Egypt's lore. I am not an Egyptian.
Mol. Thou art a man. Thy earth is but a speck;
Of it we own its beauty—claim its lore.
Mer. Thou'rt secret. Is it I? The wisest
Is on our coast—I know his title good; [man
A spirit potent as thyself proclaimed it.
'Tis just, for on my bleeding heart its truth
Is scrawled in gore; 'tis branded on my soul.

Mol. We struck the ship on its destined track;
We whirled it round on the ocean's rack;
We burst its ribs, and we broke its prore;
With beacons false we lined the shore,
But vainly we beset its path;
He was shielded from our wrath.
'Tis from thy hands we claim his life;
Spirits dare not seek this strife.
But it is written—"mortal blow
Shall lay that son of wisdom low."
But be it thou, or be it he,
One is claimed by destiny.

Mer. Ha! Is it thus? Then must we be prepared.
Thou speakest to a willing instrument,
And second'st all the promptings of my soul.
Thy word shall be obeyed; let Egypt live.
Mol. Would'st question more?
(A pause.)
Mer. Alas! thou know'st my thought;
Couldst but grant me wisdom!
Mol. Thou art answered;
It is not in our gift.
(A pause.)
Mer. Thou know'st my thought.
Mol. Speak; or I answer not.
Mer. Wert thou a god,
Though fallen, thou wouldst heed my misery;
My agony would move thee. See—I kneel—
In mercy—speak!
Mol. Demand!
Mer. Where is my bond?
Where is my son, my lost one? Answer me,
Breathe but a hope, I'll bathe with tears of blood
Thy burning footprints. Give me but one hope
To cheer this woe-worn breast. Shall I behold him?
Grant me but that, and I will seek no more.

Mol. Mortal! be thy pray'r fulfilled,
Even as thy wish hath willed;
Fair as when his form was passed
Through mine altar's raging blast,

With heart as warm, and purer far
Than thine, when on Chaldea's plain
You gazed upon the morning star,
And panted for the night again.
When, as a shepherd in the dance
You bore the blushing wreath away,
And conquered, ere the eve's advance,
A maid, whose love ne'er knew decay:
Say, was that coronet of flowers
Less bright than those thou since hast worn,
Or hast thou gained in gaudier hours
A heart more pure, a soul more warm?
But he—her son—thou shalt embrace
And read his father in his face;
His fair form again behold,
And with a parent's love enfold.
Even as thy wish hath willed,
Mortal! be thy pray'r fulfilled.

SCENE II.

A Hall in Meroth's Palace.

MEROTH *and* ARBACES.

Mer. They've tasted human blood, why need they pause?
He's but a stranger, and a foreigner.
Arb. Those are the strongest reasons urged against us.
Besides, his charity has won the mob,
Who peal his praises in the public streets;
Our path is fraught with danger.
Mer. Grant it, true,
And we must meet them.
Arb. Might they not be shunned?
Mer. Never, by me—my power is at stake,
That is not pow'r which for aid relies
On every feeble dotard's withered arm;
Let us proceed to trial.
Arb. We have not
The voices of the council in our favour.
Mer. How? art thou sure?
Arb. Not quite, the waverers
Might turn the scale,
Mer. And those thou hast secured.
Arb. I know, but this—they listened—even then
Our project's based upon the faith of traitors.
Mer. Aye, to themselves; they may be true to us,
And bound to us in adamantine bonds
Indissoluble; I've no trustier friends
Than those I shield from a reproachful world,
For in my ruin they bewail their own.
A little time well used—
Arb. We have no time,
For know you not he leaves our port to-night?
Mer. To-night, said'st thou?
Arb. Some of the ships have left,
The others *then* to follow.
Mer. And—to-night?
(Aside.) (Why do I hesitate? 'tis mine or his.)
Let them depart; we'll urge our friends no more.
Arb. This is indeed a respite.
Mer. Yes, we'll spare
Irad's most merciful and tender heart;
But by Remphan's bright star, I'll ne'er forget
His favours, 'till he's drunk of that same cup
His withered hands have dared to press on me.
[*Exit* ARBACES.

Enter Attendant.

Mer. Come hither, slave!
Go hence to Euclid's, bear this message there;
'Tis to the Greeks; you'll see them there, be swift;
Should they have left, make for the captain's bark;
Use all despatch; I'll wait your answer here.
[*Exit Attendant.*
(Meroth takes a richly chased goblet from a recess, speaking as follows.)
Mer. Thou leavest to-night, not Egypt, but the world!
(Solus.) And thou, who fearest to follow in my steps,
Beware, Arbaces! or thy race is short.
(Pours poison into it.)
This is a life's elixir unto thee;
Thou need'st not shun it. These few fatal
Will soon fulfil that bloody oracle [drops
Which hangs o'er me like the red pestilence
O'er our devoted Egypt. But with that
It speeds away; for to this murderous deed
Health to the land, and life to me succeed.

Re-enter Attendant.

You're speedy. Have you seen them?
Att. Yes, my lord,
I met them as I went; they'll soon be here.
Mer. Has Calmar from the temple yet returned?
Att. My lord, he has; I passed him in the gardens.
Mer. Send him to me. [*Exit Attendant.*
I'll use his innocence.
Others might pry into my secret here
Which in his simple artlessness is safe.
(Meroth looks out.)
Yes! there he wanders, by the cedar grove,
His fav'rite haunt; in meditation deep
O'er some imaginative paradise
Created new by spangled fancy's pow'r.
Such are the visions and the hopes of youth,
Which, like the luminary of the night,
Tinges with its own beauty all the scenes
Its rays delusive reach. Ah! trust them not,
Their garish tinselled gilding but deceives;
That peerless sky will soon be overcast
With sorrow's clouds and grief's soul-withering gloom,
The glittering landscape fade, and nought be found
But herbless wastes and wildernesses dire.

Wake from thy trance, fond youth, 'tis all a charm—
A baseless shadow,—a delusive dream—
A mockery of ne'er performèd hope,
Deceiving to betray; more distant far
From life's stern truths and cold realities
Than is, from the parched traveller's scorched lip,
The shining surface of the false mirage.

Enter CALMAR.

Calmar, what vision woke those sunny smiles?
Trust not that sorcerer, Hope, but rather steel
Your nerves to suffer. Ah! those earth-born dreams,
It needs no magian to unravel them.

Cal. My dreams were not of earth; my thoughts were far
Above its narrow bounds.

Mer. Well, keep them so;
The more above the earth, the nearer heaven.
But I have now disturbed your reveries
For meaner cares. The Grecians will be here;
You'll serve the wine. In honour of the sage
I'll fill this beaker with my oldest Theban.

(He pours out the wine.)

Be sure you give it *him!*

Cal. I will, my lord.

Mer. Remember—'tis this vase you're to present,
The one I only use on state occasions;
'Tis curiously wrought, and represents
With matchless skill the last of Moussa's plagues,
With Egypt wailing for her firstborn—dead!
I would not waste such wine on beardless boys;
'Tis for their elders only. Wine like this
Unlocks heav'n's gate, the struggling soul sets free,
And buries grief and doubt—and all the cares
Which through this life torment us.

Cal. Would it could!
I'm sure I would not give it *him*, my lord.

Mer. How, boy? not give it? *(Aside.* Does he dare suspect?)

Cal. No; if its virtues were, as you proclaim,
An antidote to all our woes, I'd drain it;
But were it deeper than vast Mœris' lake,
It could not whelm my sorrows.

Mer. Boy, it might;
But in your wisdom do not test its pow'r.

[*Exit Meroth.*

Cal. (Solus.) Not test its pow'r! Why, can it be drugged?
His words might so be construed.—What were they?
"Unlocks heav'n's gate, the struggling soul sets free"—
So ran his speech. Certain, it might be so;
How pale he looked; and now, I recollect,
He trembled as he poured it from the vase—
A thing unusual—nay, ere this unknown.

(Calmar places it on a side table.)

If that a thought so base could cross his mind,
His soul would scorn it. 'Tis a cursèd thought.
Yet though it be, I will not bear the wine,
But spill it rather; though, wer't his intent,
That might be dangerous. Yet, I fear not;
Alas! why should I? Were it really poison'd,
Should I deliver it?—no, never!—never!
Ah! what to me were death? a welcome friend.
My hope is buried in the Nile's blue wave.

Enter ALCIBIADES *and* SOCRATES.

Gentlemen, welcome! Soon as he unrobes,
Lord Meroth will attend you. I'll inform him
Of your arrival.

[*Exit Calmar.*

Alcib. Yes, this is the reward of fame, which life
Were cheap to purchase. Oh! it is most grand
To sway such spirits, and to picture fair
The smiling future to the eager eye
Of the expectant gazer. If my fate
Had not been thus revealed, and those bright paths
To me exhibited, which lead my soul
To one delightful end, methinks I'd rouse
Mine energies to gain this mighty art
And bear it hence to Athens. But my deeds
Are written; in this very hall I've seen
The bright designs fate holds in store for me.

Soc. If you should strive for virtuous fame alone,
I'd ne'er repress your ardour; but I fear
You follow glory for her glittering glare,
Not her intrinsic value. Did you note
That whilst your acts were figured in your life
And shewn in their performance, the Egyptians'
Were shadowed forth in their effects—productive
Of greatest benefit to man?

Alc. You judge so harsh;
You scarce would praise the great Miltiades.

Soc. The holy cause must justify his deeds,
And glory's monument was well erected
On liberty's broad base.

Alc. And why? because
The fates an opportunity decreed
Of which he reaped the honor. You must grant
That every plain is not a Marathon.

Soc. But every battle field may be contested
On grounds of equal justice. A mere conqueror
Is often found his country's greatest curse,
And if you've bent your mind to gain alone
By war your passport to posthumous fame,
Be careful of that error. There are times
Which justify the bracing of the helm,
The poising of the spear. But few are they
Who after victory can sheathe the sword,
And in its stead bear with an equal grace
The olive wand of peace.

Alc. There are none perfect,
And he who serves his country in the field
Passes no useless life.

Soc. The veteran
Who serves his country for his country's good
Is worthy of high honor; but the man
Who in the arts of peace confers a blessing,
Like virtuous Euclid, on his fellow-men,
Ought to receive the highest of rewards
Which mortals can bestow.

Alc. What? Euclid, think you?
Had you said Meroth, then indeed I might
Have yielded my consent.

Soc. Then you would err;
You'd leave the substance for a worthless shadow;
What benefit from him have you received?

Alc. Why, like a god, I now not only know
The present but the future.
Soc. Grant it true,
(Though well I might dispute your simile,)
Are you, in cognizance of that, more blest?
Alc. Yes, for I know what glorious fate awaits me.
Soc. Think you by all such hopes are realized?
Alc. I speak but as I feel. Another's wish
I can't presume to know.
Soc. Then you admit
That at the best an individual good
Is all his art confers?
Alc. 'Twas one to me.
Soc. Say, it appeared one; for no man can judge
Even of his own acts; their motives only
Are under our command. If our intents
Are good, although the very worst effects
Spring or appear to rise from them as causes,
We shall be blameless held.
Alc. But we may judge
At least between an evil and a good.
Soc. Heav'n has blessed us with a monitor
To teach us what is right. If 'tis misused,
Its powers are impaired. An evil act
In its despite committed always owns
A twofold operation. First, the crime;
The second, and the worst, its dead'ning pow'r
Upon this principle; and woe to him
Who blunts the edge of conscience.

Enter MEROTH.

Mer. Hail, gentlemen. Is busy rumour right
Which prates of your intention to depart?
Alc. 'Tis true, we purposed sailing.
Mer. And to night?
Alcib. Such our intent was. But as some repairs
Are still, we find, required, we cannot start
Before to-morrow's eve.
Mer. Well, you'll remain
With me to-day—to that effect I sent.
Soc. In this I must request to be excused;
And as it is for Euclid's sake we leave
To comfort the bereaved afflicted father,
Would, after thanking you for favours past,
Beseech your kind permission to depart
Whereto we're bound.
Mer. Indeed, you grieve me much.
I trusted you would waste the time with me;
But, ere you leave, you'll taste with me the soul
Of Egypt's grape; I want your judgment here;
A wager—Greece its equal cannot boast.
Calmar, the wine. *(Aside.)* Remember!
Cal. Oh, my heart!
(He lets the goblet fall.)
Oh! I have spilt it, I beseech your pardon.
Mer. It was the rarest vintage; *(Aside.)* Hah! I doubt [not.
But I'll replenish it. *(To Cal.)* I need you
(Meroth refills it and gives it to Calmar.)
Take heed now; wherefore dost thou tremble, boy?
Cal. My lord, I fear not.
Mer. This is life itself;
'Tis far too rare to trust in youthful hands;
Old as the Pyramids; no ruby's blaze
So bright; no diamond clearer.
(Calmar places another goblet before Socrates, not that filled by Meroth.)
Soc. I rarely use the grape; its bad effects
I have so often witnessed, that I deem
Its use is its abuse. For my young friend
I answer not.
(Socrates and Alcibiades rise.)
Alcib. He answers as you do,
With heartfelt thanks for all your kindnesses,
Which he can ne'er repay; no, though his life
Were dedicated solely to that end.
The dream of happiness you've shown, my lord,
To these delighted eyes, is such that it
Would beggar gratitude to pay its price;
So owing, as I ever must, farewell!
[*Exeunt Socrates and Alcibiades.*
Mer. Calmar! Calmar, I say!
Fetch me that goblet hither!
(Goes to the poisoned goblet.)
Cal. This, my lord?
Mer. Aye, that, that heavy one! Is't molten lead
That you can't lift it?
(Calmar brings it trembling.)
You shiv'ring guilty wretch,
How dare you treat me thus?
Cal. Your words are false,
I am not guilty.
Mer. Terror-stricken slave,
What palsy rattles in thy shaking bones?
What ague-fit? 'Tis well, thou'st cause for fear;
How dare you break mine order?
Cal. I obeyed
A higher pow'r than thine; I saw it drugged.
I'll be your slave, but never your assassin!
Mer. Liar! recall those words; detested spy,
So, like a bloodhound, you have tracked my steps,
You vile and loathsome traitor! [me liar,
Cal. Your words betray you; first, you call
And then a spy. I know, I saw it drugged;
I am a spy, but never will be traitor.
I hurl that epithet at you again;
Applied to me, I know it to be false,
And spurn it with contempt.
Mer. Avoid my sight,
Spawn of a Hebrew slave! tempt me no more!
Cal. I am no Hebrew; no, nor Miriam's son,
Though if I were, it were far worthier
To be her son than thine; for he, thou said'st,
Was passed through fire to Moloch.
Mer. (Stabs Calmar.) Take thy fate;
Perish my doting weakness with thee too.
Meroth no more will seek a friend in man!
(Calmar dies. Meroth approaches the body.)
Mer. Why didst thou tempt me, Calmar? Speak—one word.—
What, art thou gone? and by my wrathful hand?
Oh, cursed fate! the guardian angel's gone,
That fenced heav'n's wrath from me, and nought
But horror now and guilt. [is left
(Moloch appears.)
You were unbidden.

Mol. That is my victim.
Mer. Thine? 'tis false; no claim
Has guilt on innocence, and that was his.
Mol. He is thy son; can'st thou not read in him
His mother's smile? Thou gav'st me what thou could'st,
His mortal frame.
Mer. My son? no—mercy! mercy!
Mol. He is thy son.
Mer. No! I will plead no more.
Cheer on your damnèd host, accursèd fiend!
Back from your prey! I scatter to the winds
All faith; I dare damnation, and defy
Thy pow'r to part us now.
Mol. Thy threats are vain.
Thou'rt in our pow'r, and that frame is mine.
Mer. Oh righteous heav'n! thy doom severe is just.
Didst thou not say I should embrace my son,
Mine only son, and with a father's love,
Knowing him mine, be blest on earth once more?
Mol. Thou dost embrace him, mortal; should'st thou doubt,
Thou canst behold upon his breast the brand,
Mine image, and my sign, by thee impressed
Indelible, till death!
Mer. Forgive me, heav'n!
Mol. Murd'rer of thy son, thine only son,
Think'st thou repentance can o'ersway such guilt?
Mer. Oh, fear me not—I'm thine. Pardon there's none;
I ask it not—I need it not. Despair
O'ercomes all fear; and for that senseless clay,
'Tis thine. Go—take it from a parent's sight.
Heav'n's bolt has fallen to harden. Go—depart.
(As Moloch advances towards Calmar, he perceives the talisman.)
Hah! 'tis the talisman—the holy rock!
Dear boy—beloved—on thy guileless breast
It shall for ever rest. *(Ironically.)* Go!—Take thy prey.
What, art thou, too, appalled? Child of my youth,
Not e'en thy clay shall be a fiend's sport.
I swear by all that men and demons dread,
By Sinai's rock, and by the holy law,
Whilst I exist, dear boy, thine earthly frame—
So beautiful, fair emblem of thy mind—
Sacred shall rest beneath that holy charm.
Hah! I might howl for mercy; but 'tis this
Which mocks your might. Away, I say; avaunt!
Thou canst not part us yet. My time will come,
I know; but 'tis not yet. My son! my son!
(Meroth throws himself on the body, and Moloch sullenly retreats as the scene closes.)

SCENE III.

A Room in a Lodge near Meroth's Palace. (Flames visible without.)

Enter Attendants, supporting MEROTH.

1*st Att.* This way, my lord. The lodge has been prepared.
Take out that table. Spread that mantle o'er
The couch. Quick, slave! my lord is ill at ease.
Mer. No; I will forth.
1*st Att.* You cannot aid them *there*.
Let us entreat you to remain, my lord.
(Noise without.)
2*nd Att.* There was a crash. The roof has fallen in.
1*st Att.* All my lord's papers, too, were in that tow'r;
I wonder not he takes it so to heart.
Mer. Away and help—protect him. Hah! see there.
Torn, torn to shreds. Oh! mercy, mercy, mercy!
My boy—my dàrling boy.
1*st Att.* He raves.
2*nd Att.* He's mad.
Mer. No, no, you cannot aid him; I forgot.
My brain is seered; 'tis scorched and shrivelled up
By this insufferable heat. Ope all
The doors and casements; I am stifled here.
(Meroth goes to the couch.)
1*st Att.* My lord, let me assist you.
(1st Attendant motions the others out. Exeunt.)
Mer. Ah! is't you?
1*st Att.* This pillow's softer. You'll feel better now.
What can I bring you? All will yet be well.
The fire is only in the western tow'r;
They've saved——
Mer. Ah! what?—the tow'r?
1*st Att.* *(Aside.* No, that's lost; I heard it fall.) The furniture, I trust.
Mer. Oh! I have had such dreams. Go out and fetch
Some water, for I'm parched with raging thirst.
1*st Att.* Had you not better try some wine, my lord?
Mer. No; water, water! *[Exit Attendant.*
Hark, they shout his name;
Yes, it is Calmar's name. Again, again,
Peal upon peal, that thunder: how it rings,
Cracking my deaf'ned ear, loud as the yell
Of Lucifer, when on his brazen brow
Shivered the fatal bolt. Ah! breathe it not,
It jars upon my heart: in mercy cease.

Re-enter 1st Attendant, with water.

1*st Att.* All the old wines, my lord, I fear,
There's none so rare in Egypt. [will spoil;
Mer. Let them go.
1*st Att.* The plate, too; that's destroyed. There's nothing saved.
Ah me, that I should live to see this day.
(Noise without.)
Voices outside. Nay, 'tis no use; come on, we have you safe.

Enter 2nd Attendant.

2*nd Att.* Bring in the wretch.
3*rd Att.* In with the villain, here.

2nd Att. My lord, we've found him.

Enter Attendants, dragging in ZADOK.

4th Att. Nay, your struggling's vain;
I've hold of you, you scoundrel.
Mer. Loose him, slave.
2nd Att. We found him in the vaults; the torch in hand
With which he fired the palace.
Mer. Shameless liar,
I fired it myself. You gape and stare;
Was it not *mine?*
2nd Att. He knows not what he says.
Mer. 'Twas I that did it. Let him go, I say.
3rd Att. He's frantic, sure.
Mer. (Approaching Zadok.) Come, Zadok, it is I.
You shall find shelter here. Know you me not?
(Meroth whispers to Zadok.)
Zad. No, no, you're not; you can't deceive me so.
He was as rosy as the blushing morn,
And you, you're pale as death; you frighten
Away! your eyes glare so. [me.
Mer. (Aside.) My brother too;
All, all forsake me now. The murderer,
He has no friend; even a madman spurns him.
(Here Zadok looks on the fire.)
Zad. See how it streams upon the wind! 'tis like
A woman's hair—no, no, like forkèd tongues
Licking the skies for water. Now 'tis changed
Into a nest of serpents,—how they hiss
And dart at all around.
2nd Att. Hark at him now,
Rejoicing o'er his work!
Mer. Stop your false tongue,
You lying villain, or I'll tear it out.
Zad. Hah! see that monster on the buttress there!
He's wreathing it about with circling folds.
No, no—he can't!—Yes, yes! he conquers now,
And shoots aloft his crest for victory!
Hurrah! hurrah!
Mer. Oh, horrible to hear
Beyond endurance; lead him from my sight,
But with all care. See that you harm him not.
[*Exeunt Attendants with Zadok.*
(Solus.) I'll glory in my allies;—better far
To league with devils than to herd with men.
Why, such a forlorn smitten wretch might draw
Tears from a damnèd soul; but wolfish man
(Whose currish spirit quails at nobler game)
Thus ever preys upon his wounded mate,
Left—misery-worried—in life's wilderness.

Re-enter 1st Attendant.

1st Att. The western tower's in ruins.
Mer. That is well.
1st Att. And there's no news of Calmar.
Mer. Better still!
1st Att. (Aside.) (He loved him well,—surely he heard me not.)
I said Calmar was lost. [slave!
Mer. (Thrusting him out.) Then seek him,
[*Exit 1st Attendant.*
Yes! 'twas for thee I lit that funeral pyre;
'Twas meet for thee, my son; I could not stoop
To hide by other means, the deed; but now
That dreadful secret's safe, there's comfort yet.

Re-enter two Attendants with the fatal vase, which has been rescued.

1st Att. My lord, your cup, your fav'rite cup is saved.
Mer. Out, screech-owl!—hence!
1st Att. (Aside.) You found it—take it him.
2nd Att. (Aside.) He's angered.
1st Att. (Aside.) Nonsense—you'll be well rewarded.
[*Exit 1st Attendant.*
Mer. Did you recover this? *(aside.)* (All, all is known;
'Twas in the very room.) Slave, didst thou see
Aught else?
2nd Att. What else, my lord?
Mer. Dost tremble?
I'll tear it from thy heart. Let me know all,
You prying wretch! unlock your bolted jaws,
Or they shall gape in death. Speak out, I say.
2nd Att. My lord, I could not for the smoke and flames. [lie.
Mer. Why dost thou shiver so? 'Tis a foul
Beware my vengeance! Let me know the worst,
For I *will* know. Now speak.
2nd Att. (Kneels to Mer.) Pardon, my lord!
Mer. Fetch the cup hither.
(Meroth pours his purse of gold into it.)
Here is gold: thou art
A Median,—take it,—and away with speed
Back to thy country: if I see thee once,
But once again, on Egypt's soil, thou diest!
2nd Att. This is reward.—Gold! glittering gold!—the cup—
He could not mean that too. Well. I am off;
A freeman too!—he gave me liberty.
[*Exit Attendant.*
Mer. Now for that fearful whisper. All is known,
And I am doomed;—I could have stifled it;
But, no more blood. Alas! why need I fear?
My power can pluck down justice from her seat,
And break her bribèd sword. 'Tis all in vain;
That whisper will condemn me. Though I cut
The tongues from the pale cowards muttering it,
'Twill linger in their base fear-frozen hearts,
Nor can the haughtiest despot on his throne
Revoke its judgment or reverse its doom,
Or silence its small voice. Small, did I say?
It is a trumpet's blast, whose hideous tone
With terror frights my reason from her throne.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Hall in MEROTH'S *Palace.*

(MEROTH *solus.*)

Enter an Officer.

Mer. Have you the prisoner?
Off. We have, my lord,
(Socrates led in guarded.)
Mer. Well, lead him quickly to a secure cell,
And let a sentry be deputed there
To watch his safety. Hark ye! no speech:
He is a sage; let him commune awhile
With his own heart. Take heed unto your charge. *(Exeunt Officer, Socrates, &c.)*
Would that his heart's reproaches were like mine;
Would that the horrors of my guilty couch
Might haunt his prison cell.

Enter Attendant.

What noise is that?
Att. My lord, the people clamor at the gate.
Mer. What, am I bayed? then order out the guard.
Where are they, slave?
Att. They're mustered in the court.
Mer. Stay. (I will see these famine-hunted slaves,
And feed mine eyes with torture; mark the tracks
Of pestilence and want, death's chariot wheels,
Over their spiritless and wasted frames.)
Go tell them I will hear their grievances
In this my chamber. Let them send me in
A deputation to report their wants.

Enter ARBACES.

Arbaces, right. Come, sit by me and hear
This mutineering music.
Arb. Good my lord,
Give them fair words, at least; and 'twould be best
(For they are almost desperate) to shew
Some pity for their woes. Might I advise,
Some more substantial proof of your regard
Would suit the time; indeed, my lord, it would.

Enter Attendant.

Att. My lord, the deputation.
Mer. Well, admit them:
Admit these rioters.

Enter Deputation.

Why, one might deem,
From their attenuated wiry forms,
Their dim and glaring eyes, and hollow cheeks,
That hell had belched her meagre squadrons forth,
And spectres sent to daunt us.
Arb. Gently, gently.
Mer. What causes you thus to beset my gates
With your seditious cries? Can I compel
The elements, and cause the Nile to rise
On the now sterile land, and fill your barns
With grain? Think you that I can bind
The pestilence which heav'n, in judgment, sends
To punish your misdeeds? What would ye have?
1*st Dep.* We're driven to't by want. Your dogs, my lord,
Revel in waste whilst we are famishing.
Mer. Want has not tamed your brazen insolence.
2*nd Dep.* Despair is daring. There's none left to mourn
If I should suffer. In your granaries
There's that we seek, and that which we *will* have.
Mer. You're over bold. That's a full stomached boast,
A black heart's surfeit; arrogance's scum,
The filthy vomit of blasphemous pride.
What, does it riot yet—unchecked, unpurged—
In your sin-spotted souls? Well, compass that,
And you can help yourselves, nor need to ask
My will, nor thus prefer your 'plaints to me.
Arb. (My lord, you must not mock them.) It is wrong
To threat, my friends; you will not gain your end
By such a means: rather you should implore
Lord Meroth's mercy. If you knew how well
He labors with the Gods in your behalf,
I'm sure you'd spare such threats.
3*rd Dep.* Help us, my lord!
We cannot see our wives and children starve.
Mer. You were unthrifty. You should have prepared
For this ere now: the careful must not want
That you who were so prodigal may live.
A woman. Oh! mercy, mighty Meroth!
Mer. Ask not me!
Crouch to the Gods; bend your rebellious necks
And lick the temple's holy dust for food.
We cannot shield you from heav'n's fiery darts,
Although we suffer for your vile misdeeds.
Wom. My babe could not have sinned.
Mer. Bewail your lust,
Of which it is the victim. Bestial grossness,
Which famine could not tame, nor pestilence
In its hot quest—appal.
Wom. Have you a heart?
Are you a woman's son? So merciless
To one so innocent!
Mer. Your leprosy,
The plague-spot of your vice, in it's condemned,
(Meroth and Arbaces converse apart.)
1*st Dep. (to 2nd)* 'Tis not for man to wield the scourge of God.

2nd Dep. Go to; I'll stay no longer. Foreigners
Cast on our shores are far more merciful
Than our Egyptian nobles.
Mer. What! again
Hurled in my teeth by beggars?
Arb. (interrupts him) The lord Meroth
Commands you to proceed unto the temple,
Where after sacrifice, and thanks to heav'n,
The priests will tender to each supplicant
Three measures of ground corn.
All. Long live lord Meroth!
Arb. Depart now, peacefully, as you're commanded,
And if you've heard a few unwelcome truths,
Remember too the deeds.
All. We will, we will;
Thanks to the mighty Meroth, friend of Egypt.
[*Exeunt deputation.*
Mer. I hate their rank and musty breath.
Their praise!
I'd rather hear the fell hyena howl,
The vengeful adder hiss — *(to Attendant.)*
Fetch me some wine.
(The attendant brings it in the rescued cup.)
Not *that*, slave!
Att. My lord?
Mer. Away with it! have I no goblet else
That it must haunt me ever?
Att. This alone
Of all the set was saved; the other plate
Was in the fire destroyed. [fear,
Mer. Give it to me. *(Aside.)* It is a childish
I'll heed it not.
(He attempts to drink.)
The graver's cursèd skill
Makes dumb things prate; puts language in their eyes,
And "fearful secrets" in their cloven lips;
Even their postures are all-eloquent
With speechless awe. Their very draperies
Life-like, with stony horror petrified!
Reveal your knowledge! Peal your lies; ALOUD! [hence,
I do defy and scorn ye! *(to Att.)* Take it
And if you CAN, destroy it.
Att. (This, I know,
Was his especial favorite; I'll ask him.)
Is it your highness' pleasure that this be
Sent with the metal found, to be recast?
Mer. Cast it in hell; 'twill spue it forth again.
Hurl mountains on it, bury it in seas
Of depth beyond compute, *'twill not be hid!*
Away with it, I say!
[*Exit Attendant.*
Arb. *(Aside.)* (This is mere madness!)
These bursts of rage, my lord, but ill beseem
Your sacred character and holy office;
'Tis not expedient to loose the reins
Of passion for such trivial offences.
Mer. Trivial! all things are trivial in life.
Arb. 'Tis true, they are, but on these nothings hang
Our lives and reputations. Yesterday,
When Euclid mourned his only daughter's fate,
Instead of comforting, you taunted him
With dotage, and declared that in Arabia
Parents were found who sacrificed their babes,
And smiled to hear them shrieking.
Mer. Did I so?
I had forgotten.
Arb. Others will not, I fear.
If you would rouse your innate energies,
All would again be well. Troubles, now mountain-like,
Would vanish from that genius which has ruled
So long and well the destinies of Egypt.
Pardon my boldness in requesting you
Again to be yourself. Self-interest, [bond,
Which I have heard you call man's strongest
Compels, and must excuse my earnest speech;
For you well know that if it falls, my lord,
I and those friends who still support your throne
Are buried in its ruins.
Mer. Fear not me.
Aid me to-night, and I once more will plant
My standard in the gap. I am the head;
That which is aimed at you is aimed at me,
And what you fear but urges me to act.
Arouse our friends, we'll take our seat to-night,
And will preside ourself. Fail not—farewell!
[*Exit Arbaces.*
What, will they goad me? Will they hound me forth
Again upon the stage? Aye, let them hunt;
They'll find it were more prudent to have roused
Our Afric lion from his gory lair;
Away, remorse! be mercy's fountain dry,
And hope an alien to this barren breast.
Let the vindictive passions reign supreme
In this distracted frame; and bloody discord
Fell with this arm the hated human race.

SCENE II.

The Hall of the Magi.

MEROTH, ARBACES, IRAD, *Magi, and Attendants.*

Mer. Brothers in wisdom, sages of our land,
The ornaments of Egypt and the world,
Urged by our country's wants, we've summoned ye
For your resolves on calm deliberation [ye
Of this dread oracle, so big with fate
To us and Egypt. 'Tis in part fulfilled,
The other yet remains. "The lore of Egypt"
And Egypt's lore is that which she contains.
If it be so, here on our shore is now
The "wisest in the world." It is as though
The Gods themselves, jealous of Egypt's rights,
Had sent him as a victim to our coast.
And so convinced were we of the behest [fame
Of heav'n in this, that, though perchance our
May suffer for the act, we have confined him.
If there be crime in this, 'tis we are guilty:

On our own head, then, be its punishment
If it be crime, which for our country's good
We have performed. Let your collective wisdom
Now fully and maturely weigh the right
We have to offer him unto our Gods;
Nor be our wretched country's woes forgot,
Which urged us to break the laws of "men"
In our submission to the will of heav'n.

Arb. This doubt I will essay to clear, for I
Have deeply pondered on our country's woes.
Anxious I strove by human wisdom long
T' unravel this dread mystery in vain;
Until, clear as a sunbeam to my mind,
E'en in a fable left by those of Goshen—
Our laborers and serfs—the truth I found.
Nor be the knowledge we may gain condemned
Though drawn from records of benighted slaves;
By meanest instruments heav'n often works,
And what's oft hidden from the sage is found
The plaything of a child. With this premised,
I will relate a legend of the Jews.
'Tis said by them their patriarch Abraham
Was ordered by his God to slay his son—
His only son; to which command he bowed;
And leading forth the boy into the wood,
With all submissive reverence he reared
An altar for the victim. Wondering,
The child in silence saw the wood prepared,
The kindled fire; then, innocent, inquired,
Where is the lamb, my father? Even then,
After the last embrace, when poised in air
The trembling knife confessed a parent's woe,
A voice from heav'n forbade th' intended stroke,
And lo, caught in a thicket by its horns,
A victim, heav'n-selected, saved the child.

(Meroth, who exhibits during this speech the guilt on his conscience, here interrupts Arbaces by exclaiming,)

Mer. You're wrong; the knife was buried in his breast.
Demons, not Gods, impelled him to the act,
And blushed at its performance. Guilty horror
From that time seized him. All men shrank from him [guilt,
As one polluted: their looks reproached his
Their voices trumpeted his damning crime.

(Meroth rushes from the Council.)

Arb. The legend ran not so; the child was saved.
So 'tis with us. Whilst pond'ring on the fate
Of one of us—for "Egypt's lore" are we,
And such the oracle demanded—lo,
Cast in our port a heaven-selected victim,
"The wisest in the world," awaits his doom
From us. So the high ends of heaven
Shall by his death be answered. Furthermore
The voice of fate speaks in his acts, and cries
For vengeance on this scorner of our Gods.

Irad. The oracle requires the "lore of Egypt."
He is a stranger, and as such, methinks,
Is clear from such a doom. If it be proved
That he blasphemes our Gods, why then, indeed,
Our laws might punish him; although his acts
Should plead for mercy from our countrymen.
I saw him dragged to prison through our streets,
And heard the blessings show'red upon his head,
His aged head. Why, famine's hollow cheek
Was strained to shout his praise; for he, it seems,
Out of his ships had given to our poor,
Unasked, some portion to relieve their wants.

1st Mag. Yes, to what end? The factious demagogue
Only by that endeavoured to arouse
Our people to revolt. But yesterday
They rushed to Meroth's palace in a body,
Shouting that "unity was strength," "the many
Were trampled by the few;" and belching forth
The musty ends of what this man had taught
Approached to sack it. [them,

2nd Mag. I was at the ships
When he distributed the corn, and heard
Nought from his lips which might be termed sedition. [thanked him
'Tis true, in kindness, when they would have
With servile adoration, he reproved them;
Told them "it was unworthy men to kneel
To mortals like themselves; that all were brethren;"
And doubled what he gave by the kind way
In which he gave it. "'Twas not charity
(He said), but simply duty to relieve them;"
And by such means so won their hearts and hands,
That angels might have envied him the pay
He had for what he gave. The oracle
Demands the "lore of Egypt:" he's a Grecian,
Unread in all our lore; and policy
Would dictate to us not to rouse that nation
By any overt act. Remember Xerxes!

Re-enter MEROTH.

Arb. What, shall we tamely see our laws
Our altars desecrated, and the rites [insulted,
Of Isis made a mockery and scorn?
Why, even in the temple of our Gods,
I heard him say that "human victims were
Of barbarism a relic." Furthermore,
"That as philosophy enlightened man,
These evils," so he termed our holy rites, [just
"Would vanish from the earth." It were but
That he should suffer death for this alone;
But when the Gods, from oracles inspired,
Demand his sacrifice or ours, who dare
Oppose their righteous judgment?

2nd Mag. If 'twere so,
He should be heard in his defence; 'twere wrong,
If guilty, to condemn him thus unheard.

Arb. Guilty? his guilt is written on his brow.
I never saw a human countenance
So crammed with crimes; he carries in his look
The brand and stamp of nature on a villain.
If he be wise, his wisdom only working
To evil ends and purposes, as proved,
It but debars his claim on us for pity.
A fool might err in judgment; but the man
Who, knowing right, persists in acting wrong,
Is of all human beings most to blame.
Expedient 'tis, perhaps, he should be heard
In his defence; but 'tis expedient too
That, after being heard, he should be doomed
To expiate with his life the wrath of heav'n.

Mer. You have judged rightly. It would be unwise
To rouse the spirit of the hardy Greeks

By thus condemning him unheard. We'll hear
His plea for mercy; but heav'n's holy voice
Has from the oracle announced his death.
Bring in the prisoner, ourself will charge him
With his misdeeds; enough to call down wrath
On Egypt and the world.

(Socrates led in guarded.)

Unhappy man! know'st thou the crimes for which
Thou art arraigned before this high tribunal?

Soc. Crimes?

Mer. Aye, crimes; and of the blackest dye,
For which you now must answer.

Soc. I know not
Of aught I've done, whilst in your city here,
Which merits punishment; please you inform me.

Mer. You are impeached by those who've heard and seen
Your evil acts; whose evidence is truth,
And never can be swerved by subtle logic.

Soc. May I not know my errors? Probably
That which to you appears iniquity,
I may esteem as virtue. I have seen
Such acts in Egypt dignified with praise,
Which we of Greece would term abominations.

Mer. That but confirms those accusations which
Press heavy on your life. You are accused
Of having spoken evil of our rites;
Nay, scoffed at our most sacred sacrifice,
E'en in the holy temple. Furthermore,
Of having stirred the people to revolt
Against their lawful rulers, with intent
To overthrow the government of Egypt.

Soc. And who are my accusers on these charges? [ness

Mer. Suffice it, they are men whose worthi-
To us is known, nor can we doubt their truth,
Even the members of this present council.

Soc. What, judges and accusers? Is that law?
Or is it just, that they who thus impeach me
Should arbitrate upon their own assertions?

Mer. We do not sit to hear our laws insulted,
But to apply them on a criminal,
A guilty malefactor. Have you aught
To urge in your defence, to mitigate
The penalty you merit?

Soc. If you sit
As judge presiding, is it right to brand
Me guilty ere you've heard me in defence?

Mer. You will be both condemned, and punishment
O'ertake your crimes, ere that, if you persist
In trifling thus with us. Once more, I ask
What would you urge to mitigate your doom?

Soc. Why, if I must be punished, it were vain
For me to strive to shake your settled minds.
But, as I might, e'en here, awake some few
To see th' injustice of this harsh proceeding,
I will essay to exculpate myself,
At least from one of those high charges which
Are urged against me. For the first, that I
Have spoken evil of your rites; I own
I did remark unto my young disciple,
('Twas at the sacrifice of Euclid's daughter,)
That I—

Mer. Nay, speak it not again; these walls
So sacred would, methinks, overwhelm a wretch
Who dared so to blaspheme our holy Gods.

Soc. 'Tis a reformer's fate to die unheard.
Well, time will do me justice; as for those
Who meanly overheard, and then reported
(That which in confidence was spoken there,)
My lord, I pity them.

Mer. Reserve your tears;
If they were seas, you'd need them.

Soc. For the last,
Which rates me with a wish to rouse your slaves
To spurn their iron chains, 'tis basely false.

Arb. How false? I heard you at the ships declare [our people)
"That when the flock" (by which you meant
"Were found so to decrease, that one might deem
The shepherds were to blame;" thus charging us,
Their rulers, with neglect, and urging them
To deeds most foul by your insinuations.
The impotence of age and servile fear
Alone restrained your base and evil thoughts
From rip'ning into acts.

Soc. You are mistaken.
'Twas neither age nor fear which thus restrained me;
Nor can you sit in judgment on my thoughts.
Not that I fear to utter them, e'en here,
In answer to that slander. They shall speak,
Nay, plainly prove its baseness. Unprepared
Your people are for liberty's blest gift,
And I ne'er strove to rouse their dormant hearts.
But had I found them otherwise—the mass
I speak of, not the favored few—
By education moulded, and their souls
Warmed and expanded into reason's life,
Nor age nor fear had then sufficed to stop
Mine offer of the gift; and this old trunk,
Inured to war, should now be cased in steel
To aid them to obtain it. For this boast
Your pardon; it was wrung from me. I am
A Grecian soldier. Why, 'twould warm these veins,
Not stagnate them, to meet pale death arrayed
In liberty's bright vesture. I would press
First in the van to clasp him to my heart,
Expiring joyful in his blest embrace.

Arb. Who dare defend him?

1st Mag. Smite him on the mouth;
Jailer, 'tis I who bid thee.

A Mag. Odious villain!

Mer. Now, Irad, need you more?

Irad. I do, my lord;
I shall except, and conscientiously,
Against the major charge; for it is plain
That one who here so boldly has declared
His mind in this, e'en in the face of death,
Would not descend to lie to cover aught
He said before the people. Furthermore,
That I and many here do not believe
The stranger and the foreigner to be
The victim by the oracle demanded.
And though somewhat too bold in his defence,
(The fault, perhaps, of conscious innocence,)
I would inquire, before that you proceed

To judgment, if the prisoner can call
In evidence to prove his statement true.
Soc. Thanks for your kindness; there is one who could,
If that he dared, confirm what I have spoken.
Irad. Let him not fear; he shall be safe from harm.
But is he an Egyptian?
Soc. Yes; a priest.
One of your order, and his name is Calmar!
(Meroth rises.)
Mer. Why do you glare on me? Avert your eyes:
They glow like coals of fire. Think you I know?
On, to the sentence; wretch, your hints are vain.
Irad. Nay, let us hear him, for his evidence
May be material.
Mer. Aye, yes; send for him.
No, no, you need not send; 'twill be in vain.
If he should come! no, no! He's not been seen
Since last we sacrificed to holy Isis;
Years must have passed since then, though time has marked
But two *eternal* days. He loved the gardens,
Perhaps he may be there. The flow'rs will pine;
They were his favorites. I'll nourish them
With tears of fire, till they shall tow'r aloft
Above this damnèd world, to heav'n his home,
Beyond the burning sun. I say 'tis vain
To send for him. Why do you mock me thus?
Let us proceed to judgment; if the vote
Should be required in this, why need we then
Demand *his* presence here? He will not come.
I know he will not answer. If he could,
There is no dell nor mountain summit which
Should not repeat his well-belovèd name
Till I outwearied echo with my cries.
Why, I would crack the heav'n's vaulted arch
Pealing his name, if he would answer me.
Remove the prisoner, I say. We'll take
Your votes on this proceeding.
A Mag. 'Tis most strange!

SCENE III.

A Road in the Suburbs of Memphis. Time, Night.

ALCIBIADES, CRITO, *and Greek Sailors disguised.*

Alcib. You might have saved him. Had you not your swords?
To let him be dragged off without a blow
By Meroth's guard! What signified a host
Of such luxurious slaves?
Crito. 'Twas Socrates' command
We should not aid him; or this trunk I'd left
In Euclid's house, if needed.
1*st Sail.* His reasons were—
Alcib. Reasons, indeed; you should have *acted*
And listened to his reasons afterwards; [first,
But we'll secure a hostage for him here.
Crito. This is a lonely road.
Alcib. The better for our purpose,
For I have noted the nobility
Of Egypt do frequent it. What is that?
A cottage?
1*st Sail.* 'Tis the sacrificer's, captain.
Alcib. The sacrificer's? Ah, then that's the key
Unlocks this secret. I have often seen
Their priests upon this route; but hide yourselves;
Quick! I hear footsteps.
(All hide.)

Enter two Magians—Enter another.

3*rd Mag.* Whither so fast, my friends? Where are you bound?
1*st Mag.* Hah—is it you, Charones?
3*rd Mag.* Yes, the same.
I'm journeying to our sacrificer's cottage.
2*nd Mag.* Well, so are we.
3*rd Mag.* We'll travel then together:
'Tis dangerous to tread this path alone.
They say there are no tidings of Tigranes;
He will be needed at the sacrifice
To-morrow.
1*st Mag.* What, is there to be one then?
3*rd Mag.* Were you not at the council?
1*st Mag.* No, nor knew
There was one holden. What more butcher work
Has Meroth now in hand?
3*rd Mag.* You've missed a scene,
An awful scene.
2*nd Mag.* But let us know, who is't?
1*st Mag.* Who is the victim? tell us that, Charones.
3*rd Mag.* Why, he has ta'en the Grecian prisoner
And used all arts against him. I was one
Who voted with him, and condemned to death
That noble virtuous man. But I would brave
E'en Meroth's anger to revoke my judgment.
Crito. (Aside.) Captain, did you hear that?
Alcib. (Aside.) And marked it too.
I think there'll be one suffrage less to-morrow.
1*st Mag.* But what's that scene you spoke of?
2*nd Mag.* Aye, let's hear.
3*rd Mag.* Why he broke forth, e'en in the council hall,
On mention of the youth that he has lost,
The virtuous Calmar, whom he really loved;
But when he sentenced the old man, he raved;
He literally foamed with frantic rage.
1*st Mag.* So staid and solemn as he is, 'tis strange.
3*rd Mag.* 'Tis not more strange than true; but here's the man;
Yes, it is he.

Enter Sacrificer with a Bag.

You are to be prepared
Against to-morrow for a sacrifice
In great Osiris' temple; do not fail.
So ends my business here.

(Alcibiades, Crito, and Sailors rush forth.)

Alcib. Not quite, my friend;
You are my prisoner. *(The Sacrificer flies.)*
3*rd Mag.* Here's money.
Alcib. No, my friend,
'Tis life we want; our Grecian Gods require,

Like yours, a human sacrifice or two.
Hold! if you stir, you die. I heard a noise.
Crito. 'Tis our own people; one of them has 'scaped!
Alcib. These are Egyptian councillors,—a Indeed! [prize

(Re-enter Sailors with Sacrificer, &c.)
Hah! here's the butcher too;
I'll ease you of this spur; nay, if you strive,
I'll stab you, scoundrel!
Sac. Let go my hands!
Alcib. Hold your ill-uttering tongue, you mongrel cur!
Another word, I'll split it in your throat,
'Twixt earth and hell.
1*st Sail. (Aside.)* 'Twas I that took him tho'!
2*nd Sail. (Aside.)* Well, keep him then; I mean to keep this bag!
Here's his black gown—his knife—but what is this?
1*st Sail. (Aside.)* Nay, I know not; 'tis surely for the feet.
Alcib. Hold! let me see't. By heav'n, it is his mask,
And my dull brain had never compassed *that;*
I thank thee, fortune.
1*st Sail.* Why, our captain's mad;
'Tis only pasteboard, for I sounded it.
Alcib. Crito, you'll take the prey on board to-night; [ye.
Here, lads, I'll buy that bag; share that amongst
(Throws them his purse.)
Crito. You'll come with us; 'twere dang'rous to remain. [fortune
Alcib. No, I have formed a plan, or rather
Has thrust one on me. Did you not perceive
The executioner was masked?
Crito. To-night?
Alcib. No, at the sacrifice to Isis; but
His knife was never needed.
Crito. So he was.
Alcib. Well, now you take me; I remain to-night,
And act the hangman on the morrow, Crito.
Crito. Your hair is light, but this will cover all. [my locks
Alcib. 'Tis well it will; I would not shave
For all the fools in Egypt.
Crito. Captain, think;
'Tis useless madness to attempt to save him!
Alcib. 'Tis what I like, there's triumph in the thought;
I'd not attempt it were it easy done.
Have you the sailors armed on all the ships,
And man our swiftest boat with our best crew
Ready for us, if we should chance be victors.
He might be saved; if not, why I will wreak
My vengeance on that sorcerer, whose skill
I mean to test to-morrow.
Crito. Well, farewell!
Alcib. If I should fall, as much I fear I shall—
I lie, I do not fear, but so presume—
'Tis such terrific odds; you'll immolate
These victims to my manes. Great Achilles
Had a whole hecatomb, why should not I
Have three? It shall go hard but I
Will make those odds an equal ere the night;
For I will make the reeking altar drunk
With Egypt's noblest gore. Farewell, my friend,
You to your ships, and I to victory!

SCENE IV.

The Interior of the Temple of Osiris, with the statue of the god.

The Magi, Priests, Arbaces, Zadok, &c.; Voluptuaries, People, &c.

MEROTH *and* IRAD *in front.*

Irad. My lord, should you proceed in this affair,
'Twill be at your own hazard, for the court
Does not uphold you. See, the signatures
Of more than half the council are against
Proceeding further 'gainst this worthy man.
Mer. You have been diligent in your attempt
To over-rule my acts; but 'tis in vain.
He dies this morn. The temple is prepared,
The altar garlanded, the victim bound, [dies!
And ere the noon—by Pharaoh's throne—he
Irad. Then on your head may heav'n's just judgment light! [tained
Mer. Amen! Yet hear, Irad; I have at-
The pinnacle of fame, and thence behold
How meaner wings flag in their vain attempts
To win my perch; or struck by death's swift shaft, [long down
When straining on their flight, plunge head-
Into that vast abyss whose fearful depth
No mortal eye can fathom.
Irad. I admit
Your knowledge is beyond compare on earth.
What means thy language?
Mer. Listen! Would'st thou gain
The lore of art, of science, nature's works
To me are all familiar. I'll expose
To thee the wonders of the womb of earth;
The caverns of the deep, the sparkling mines
Gnome-guarded, yield to me their richest spoils.
Would'st thou aspire to wave the magic wand,
I'll teach thee spells of force, by him obtained
Whose genius, piercing first the deep profound,
Drew forth the shining ore, the mighty Cain.
And his, whose gemmed and starry throne was borne
High in mid air by genii. Thou shalt learn
What fallen angels vainly seek to know,
The oracles of heav'n, by him revealed,
Who face to face beheld omnipotence, [brow
What time paled Mithra, when his glowing
Blazed forth, the shadow of the Great Supreme.
These pow'rs I've purchased dear; to thee they're gifts,
So thou wilt aid me to effect my will. [lore
Irad. You offer much; my life for such vast
I would adventure, but mine honour,—no!

Mer. Your life you have adventured for those meeds;
Your brows are whitened, not by age, but toil;
Your spirit hath outworn its tenement;
You have not time, alone, to penetrate
Art's depths, or soar unto the difficult top
Of science' mount. This hand shall place you
On one condition, that you aid me now [there
With your support and counsel.
Irad. They were yours
Without condition—could I proffer them
With the consent of justice.
Mer. What I ask
Is justice on my foe—a cruel foe—
An enemy most merciless—whose toils,
Strong as a Lybian serpent's folds, are coiled
Around my fainting frame, whose venomed tooth,
More fell and deadly than the angered asp's,
Gnaws at my agonized and bleeding heart.
Why dost thou hesitate?
Irad. Your language is
To me obscure; impeach him of a crime,
And I will judge. These figurative terms
I understand not.
Mer. Matchless arrogance!
You were not asked to judge, but to believe;
No more. Arouse your allies to the war,
Advance your orbèd shield, and let the din
Of battle hurtle here. *You* sentence me!
Protect yourself, and sit in judgment first
Upon your own misdeeds, which may be tried
Full soon, if you persist at that dread bar
From whose tribunal there is no appeal.
Irad. I was not gained by bribes; your threats, my lord,
Move me still less; I scorn them.
(Irad retires.)
Mer. (Aside.) Thou art wise.
Mine offerings were valueless: alas!
To me they're sorrows. In misery and lore,
On earth, am I supreme.
(Several of the Magi advance and deliver protests to Meroth; he destroys them.)
There is no pause; my resolution's fixed,
Firm as great Cheop's pyramid, whose peak,
Lit by the beams of an unclouded sun,
Smiles on the scowling storm which roars below.
1st Mag. 'Tis not our act, at least our hands
2nd Mag. It is an odious deed. [are clean.
3rd Mag. And most unwise.
Mer. Did ye not pass that judgment yesternight
Which now ye would retract? But by the might
Of Moussa—the Metatron taught—there is
No thought of change in me; he dies this hour.
1st Mag. Press him no more; 'tis vain.
Irad. Then here, in midst
Of Egypt's magi, by my star I swear
That thou shalt answer for the bloody deed.
Mer. I shall, be sure, but not at thy tribunal.
What would ye have? The gods demand our lore— [forth
Ye are great Egypt's lore. Who will step
And give his life for Egypt? Is it you?
Or you?—Or, Irad, will you drain
Those stagnant drops, which, chilled by age's
Congeal around your heart? [frost,
Irad. I would as one
Adventure mé in such a cause at least;
Darest thou? [not
Mer. Dare I?—dictator!—I? what dare I
For Egypt's good? I peril now my life,
My fame, more dear, when I oppose ye thus,
Carrying your better thoughts to acts in this
For Egypt's good.
1st Mag. Good! for the most unwise
And impious mockery of human laws;
For Egypt's good is it to bring a horde
Of fierce barbarians to o'erwhelm our land
In these her days of weakness and of woe?
Mer. Pale, trembling dotard! if thou fear'st, go hence,
Bastard, not son of Egypt; for the land
Which nursed the mighty Osymandias,
The Ramses, and the mighty Tanite line,
Ne'er owned as son so base a slave as thou.
What, shall we fail to execute the will
Of our offended Gods because we fear
The wrath of man? Egypt, indeed thou'rt fallen!
I've lived too long to hear a thought so base
Breathed from a man who speaks in Pharaoh's tongue.
Away, we shall proceed; bring forth the victim!
Arb. My lord, not now; we're lost if you proceed;
Think, all is on this die.
Mer. Art thou, too, false?
Arb. False? that I cannot be; with you I fall,
Unless you yield in this.
Mer. Yield?—and to me?
Arbaces, I am Meroth.
Arb. I, your friend,
Your pupil, ever true to you, I do
Beseech you on my knees to spare this man;
To spare my life; nay, more, to save thine own.
Mer. Never! he owes a life; I'm more than robbed;
My life is horror, and my death despair!
Urge me no more, for I have sworn his death.
(As Arbaces and the Magi retire, Socrates is led in by Alcibiades disguised as the executioner.)
Lo! where he comes to meet it. Murderer!
Calmar, my son, belovèd of my soul,
Vengeance shall sanctify thy dreadful doom,
Though on the torture-bed my heart-strings crack
For him, the hated cause; though Egypt fall
In undistinguished ruin, and the night
Of chaos shroud again this guilty globe.
(Meroth retires to the altar. Alcibiades draws his sword.)
Soc. That is a Grecian blade.
Alcib. And this another!
Soc. Had you a Grecian arm to strike—
Alcib. To save,
You mean; I'm Alcibiades, your friend,
Your pupil, man; this steel would melt in tears
Ere wound thy spotless breast.
Soc. You, captain, here?
Away! this is no place for you; speed hence,
Look to the galleys; treachery reigns here!

Alcib. That is my thought. Take thou this trusty blade, [slaves.
We'll hew our way through these perfumèd
Soc. Not so; th' attempt were madness, and might cause
The loss of all our galleys. Still, 'tis well
That you are here, to mark my latest words.
I taught you how to live; here, you will learn
The way to die.
Alcib. If so, we'll die together.
Soc. That must not be; I think you are my friend;
Live then to shield my babes, for they'll be left
To you and heaven. Bear my last embrace;
Tell them my latest sigh was theirs; my trust,
That they will follow fearlessly the paths
Of virtue and of peace. Fear not to strike,
For I esteem it honor thus to fall
Beneath a Grecian arm. Strike home, my friend,
And I'll forgive the blow which sets me free.
Alcib. This arm shall wither first. Come, come, 'tis time
To wake this temple with our shout of war.
If they crave victims, we'll supply their Gods—
Aye, gorge them with a human hecatomb.
Mer. *(At the altar.)* Bring forth the victim to the altar's foot.
Alcib. Heard you that order? take this sword, my friend;
I am for Meroth; yes, that lying prophet
Shall herald me to Hades!
Mer. Falters he?
Let him be dragged by force before us—quick,
Although 'tis a bad omen.
(Attendants advance to seize Socrates.)
Soc. Off, I say!
No force; to let you know I am a Grecian,
I will advance, and die as I have lived,
Free from all slavish bonds. *(To Alc.)* Strike, and fear not.
Mer. What, will he rob hell's tyrant of his crown,
And in pale death's grim arms his victories
Trumpet with songs of triumph? *(To Alc.)* Slave, advance,
And bare your blade.
(Zadok rushes forth and kneels at Meroth's feet.)
Zad. Oh, not for him!
Pardon, my lord, most mighty Meroth, save him.
Mer. Away!—thou ravest, madman!
Zad. 'Tis no dream;
You are my brother Oran. Oh! forgive,
I knew it not, but memory returns.
That vision too! again, again, it comes;
I see once more my infancy's green glades,
And life's bright morning dawns upon my soul.
Mer. Poor visionary fool!
Zad. Hast thou forgot
Chaldea's emerald plains? Oh, 'twas there,
E'en in our tent—our father's tent—last night
I saw the snow-white flocks collected round.
The rill's sweet music gurgled in mine ear,
And at the well, where oft you watched to note
The progress of the stars—what star is there?
You know; come tell me, Oran.
Mer. Misery!
Zad. Eva was there. She called you. Hark! again!
I hear her now. Come—come away—she says.
Will you not list? The babe, your infant son,
With outstretched arms was panting for your kiss,
To close his day with joy. Come, brother, come,
And leave this stainèd land.
Mer. My son, said'st thou?
I have no son. Thou know'st not what thou [say'st.
I am the magian Meroth.
Zad. Nay, not so;
You have my brother's smile—I see it now.
You are my brother Oran.
Mer. Take him hence.
Zad. Farewell, dear brother Oh my heart is broken! *(Zadok is dragged away.)*
Mer. *(Aside.)* Chaldea, yes. Ah! would that I were there,
A shepherd boy! All Egypt's wealth I'd scorn,
Her empty honors spurn. Ye could not bribe
Nor win me back to wear your purple robe,
To hide a heart brimful of agony.
Ah, no.—What noise is that?

Re-enter Attendant.

Att. My lord, he's dead.
Mer. Dead, did'st thou say? my brother Zadok dead?
Irad. *(Aside.)* 'Twas his own brother!
1*st Mag.* *(Aside.)* Oh, unheard-of crime!
Att. He died without a pang. But as he fell
He murmured Oran, pointed to the east,
And then he smiled, and died without a sigh.
Mer. *(Aside.)* He smiled to leave this wretched evil world.
I blame him not; alas! I could not smile.
Ah, no! poor fool, 'tis thou art wisest now;
Thou wilt not own me there. Heartbroken too—
Another victim—thine and Calmar's blood;
And thou triumphant.
(to Soc.) Murderer, thou'st slain
Another victim; there thy conquest ends.
(aloud to Alcib.) Slave, bare your blade, be ready for the blow.
(to Soc.) Hah! what? You tremble now.
Soc. 'Tis false, proud priest,
It is thyself! Death hath no terrors here;
Nor would I now exchange my lot with thine.
Your evil acts to me are benefits;
Your malice, mercy. You but rob disease
Of this poor carcase, shortening my pain.
I knew that I was mortal long ere this,
And am prepared for that which must o'ertake
All human beings. Now, no more, but this,
That I forgive you; may you meet your end
Fearless as he you doom to suffer here.
(to Alcib.) Now, like Themistocles, I turn to you,
And bid you strike, Athenian! [you,
(During this speech Alcibiades throws off his disguise.)
Mer. Hah! treason! thou'rt the Greek!
Alcib. *(slaying Mer.)* And thou the victim.
Die, traitor! 'twas for thee this blade was bared.
Mer. I'm slain! the temple reels! 'tis tottering! *(The Magi support him.)*
Back, fiends! avaunt, I say! I know ye not.

Lo there!—he beckons me to him—'tis he!—
My Calmar—help! I come—hah! I'm choked
With seas of gore—all, all around is night—
Dark! dark! dark! dark for ever!
(Meroth dies. The statue of Osiris is illumined.)
Irad. Behold the hand of fate; heav'n's arm is here.

(Shouting.) Enter Attendants.
Atts. News! news! the river rises!
1*st Mag.* Ope the stores
And let the granaries of Meroth now
Be free to all. *(to Alcib. and Soc.)* For you, depart in peace.
You were the instruments alone, the Gods
The actors; they this end have wrought.

NOW AS OUR BEAUTY AND OUR LORE ARE GIV'N,
MAY EGYPT BE ONCE MORE BELOVED OF HEAVEN;
ALL IS PERFORMED WHICH THE JUST GODS HAVE WILLED,—
THE DESTINIES APPEASED,—THE ORACLE FULFILLED.

THE END.

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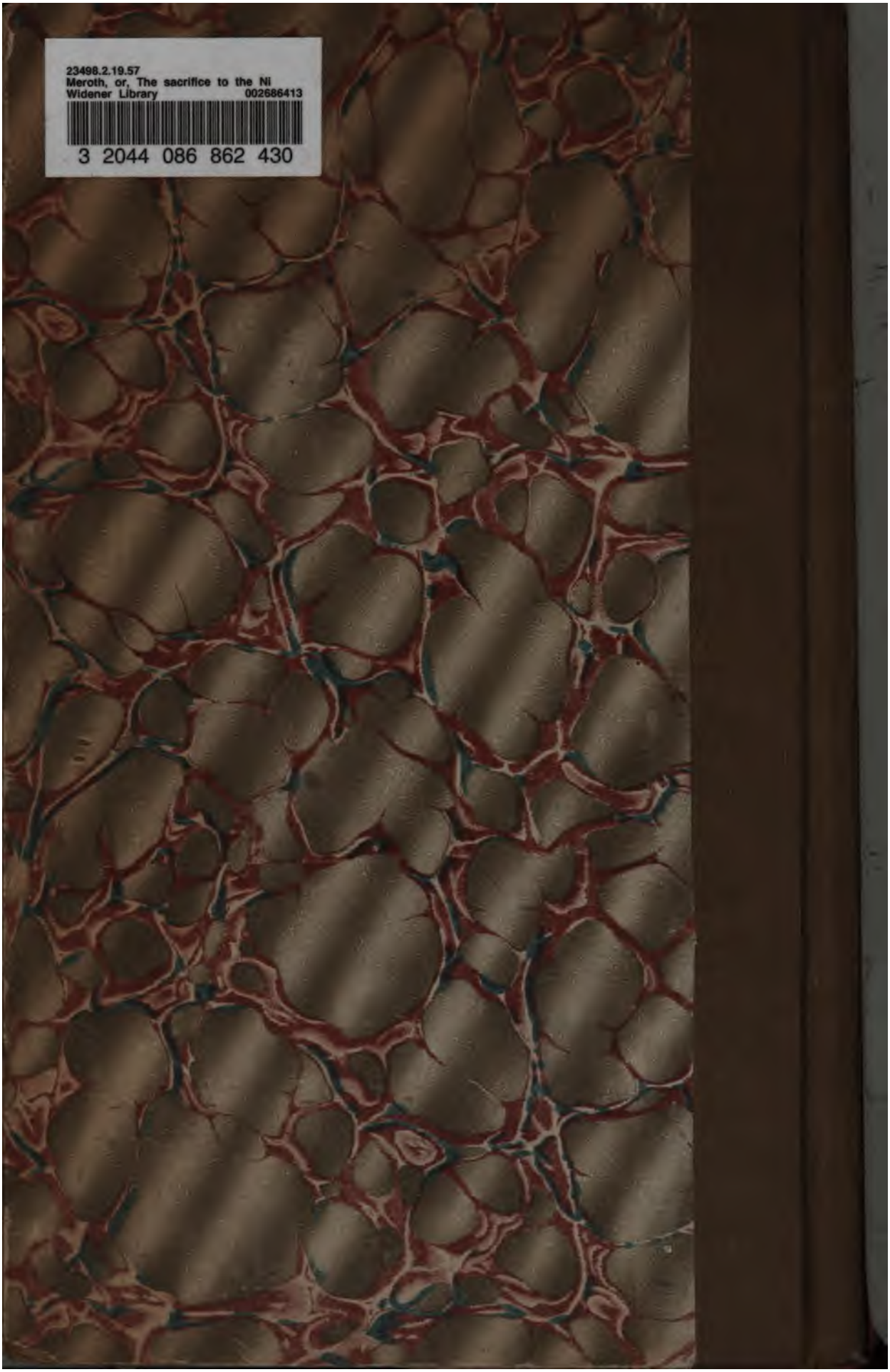
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